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Nottingham

UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

**FOSTERING LEARNER AUTONOMY IN LANGUAGE LEARNING IN TERTIARY
EDUCATION: AN INTERVENTION STUDY OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN
HOCHIMINH CITY, VIETNAM**

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**Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

JUNE 2013

ABSTRACT

Learner autonomy is widely recognised as a desirable goal in tertiary education as it is found to comply with learner-centred approaches and enable students to pursue life-long learning (Sinclair, 2000a; Ciekanski, 2007). In language teaching and learning literature, it has become the main interest of researchers and practitioners who believe that learner autonomy can enhance students' chance for success in learning a language. A great amount of research has been done to investigate various ways to foster learner autonomy in language teaching around the world (e.g., Benson, 2001; Breeze, 2002; Chan, 2001; Cotterall, 1995; Dam, 1995; Jing, 2006; Lo, 2010; L.C.T. Nguyen and Gu, 2013). However, learner autonomy is still widely considered a 'western' concept and much of the research has either been conducted in a western context or based on the western view of learner autonomy (Pierson, 1996, Sinclair, 2000a; Chan, 2001). This research aimed to gain more understanding of the development of learner autonomy in English language learning among students at a private university in Hochiminh city, Vietnam.

The study has revealed that the major perception of learner autonomy in this Vietnamese context relates to 'taking the initiative' in learning, especially in self-study. The type of learner autonomy, as understood and practised by students in the context of Vietnamese tertiary education, has been argued to have the characteristics of Littlewood's (1999) reactive autonomy. This finding lends itself to the application of Sinclair's (2000a) teacher-guided/learner-decided approach to promoting learner autonomy. In other words, an integrated learner training programme (ILTP), which gradually developed students' capacity to take more control in the learning process by providing them with metacognitive strategies for learning management, raising their

awareness of themselves as learners and of the learning context, and encouraging them to explore the English language and its learning strategies, was perceived to foster the students' willingness and enhance their ability to take the initiative in learning and create a habit of engaging more in self-directed learning.

This study has also identified certain obstacles to promoting learner autonomy in Vietnam. In particular, the exam-oriented educational context poses significant challenges to both teachers and students in their efforts to promote autonomous learning. These difficulties include time constraints and a stringent syllabus. In addition to the contextual constraints, the large power distance between teachers and students in Vietnamese culture was also suggested to be a factor in hindering learner autonomy because it results in teacher reliance and an authoritarian view of the roles of teachers in the language classroom. This cultural trait, combined with the contextual constraints, seems to discourage teachers from giving students more control in the classroom and, at the same time, inhibits students from taking such control.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to express my deep gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Barbara Sinclair, for the expert guidance and tremendous support that I have received from her in this research. It was her inspiring comments on my MA dissertation that encouraged me to commence this journey in search for knowledge in improving the effectiveness of learning English as a foreign language.

I am also deeply in debt to Dr. Ian McGrath for all his guidance in the early stage of this study. His detailed comments and constructive suggestions have played an important part in ensuring a theoretically and methodologically solid foundation for the research reported in this thesis.

This study would not have been possible without the financial support of the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training and the International Office of the University of Nottingham. I would like to thank all the staffs of these two organisations for their excellent support for my study.

I would also like to thank the University, of which I have always been a member of the teaching staff, and its students and teachers for all their support in this research. Their participation provided this study with valuable data which constitute the main findings of this thesis.

Many thanks to all my friends in Nottingham and Hochiminh City for their belief and support and for all the good moments I have had with them.

Last but not least, I owe my Mum and Dad, and especially my wife, Phuong, special thanks for their patience, encouragement, and belief in me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xiv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xv
CHAPTER 1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Learner autonomy in Vietnamese education	1
1.3 History of education and foreign language education policy in Vietnam	2
1.3.1 The Mandarin legacy	3
1.3.2 The French colonial period	4
1.3.3 The French War (1945-1954) and the American War (1955-1975)	7
1.3.4 From Reunification to 1986	9
1.3.5 From 1986 to present	10
1.4 Confucian Heritage Culture and its influence on education and learner autonomy in Vietnam	13
1.4.1 Power distance	14
1.4.2 Individualism – Collectivism	16
1.4.3 Masculinity – Femininity	17
1.4.4 Uncertainty avoidance	17
1.4.5 Long and short-term orientation	19
1.5 Research context	21
1.6 The role of the researcher in the research context	22
1.7 Significance of the research	25
1.8 Structure of the thesis	25
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW	27
2.1 Introduction	27
2.2 What is autonomy and why is it important?	27

2.2.1	The concept of autonomy.....	27
2.2.2	Why is learner autonomy important?.....	29
2.3	Definitions of learner autonomy in language education	30
2.3.1	Learner Autonomy as a capacity.....	31
2.3.2	Willingness for Learner Autonomy	35
2.3.3	Learner Autonomy as a complex construct.....	36
2.3.4	Learner Autonomy in this study.....	38
2.4	Versions of learner autonomy	39
2.4.1	Technical	40
2.4.2	Psychological	42
2.4.3	Sociocultural	43
2.4.4	Political-critical	44
2.5	Levels of autonomy	45
2.6	Learner autonomy and motivation	47
2.7	Learner autonomy in context.....	49
2.7.1	The East-West dichotomy.....	49
2.7.2	Seeds of autonomy in the West and the East	49
2.7.3	Cultural issues in learner autonomy.....	50
2.7.4	Learner Autonomy in the EFL classroom.....	54
2.8	Learner training	58
2.8.1	Learner training for the development of learner autonomy	58
2.8.2	Learner development vs. learner training	59
2.8.3	Learning strategies in learner training	61
2.8.4	Previous studies on learner training for autonomy	64
2.9	Assessing learner autonomy in language learning	70
2.9.1	The need to assess learner autonomy and its difficulties	70
2.9.2	Readiness for learner autonomy.....	72
2.9.3	Assessing learners' level of learner autonomy	76
2.10	My view of learner autonomy	80
2.11	Conclusion.....	83
CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY		85
3.1	Introduction	85
3.2	Research questions	85
3.3	Research and knowledge.....	86

3.4	Paradigms and research traditions.....	88
3.5	My research position.....	90
3.6	Research design: case study using mixed methods.....	93
3.6.1	Case study.....	93
3.6.2	Mixed methods.....	94
3.7	Scope and limitations of this study.....	98
3.7.1	Generalisability.....	98
3.7.2	Researcher bias.....	99
3.8	Research participants.....	99
3.8.1	Students.....	99
3.8.2	Teachers.....	101
3.9	Ethical considerations.....	101
3.10	Data collection instruments.....	102
3.10.1	“Readiness for autonomy” questionnaire.....	104
3.10.2	“Perspectives on learner autonomy” questionnaire.....	111
3.10.3	Focus groups.....	116
3.10.4	Semi-structured interviews.....	118
3.10.5	Learning contract and learning diaries.....	120
3.11	Research procedures and data collection process.....	122
3.11.1	Instrument piloting.....	122
3.11.2	Trust worthiness and authenticity.....	125
3.11.3	Data collection plan.....	127
3.11.4	Instrument administration.....	129
3.11.5	Summary of collected data.....	133
3.12	Conclusion.....	134
CHAPTER 4. FOSTERING LEARNER AUTONOMY - AN INTEGRATED LEARNER TRAINING PROGRAMME.....		136
4.1	Introduction.....	136
4.2	Approaches to Learner Training.....	136
4.3	Models of learner training.....	139
4.3.1	Dickinson and Carver (1980).....	139
4.3.2	Ellis and Sinclair (1989).....	140
4.3.3	Knowles (1986).....	142
4.4	Implementing Learner Training at the University.....	144

4.4.1	Overview	144
4.4.2	The main language course: Listening and Speaking 3.....	145
4.4.3	The Integrated Learner Training Programme	146
4.5	Components of the Integrated Learner Training Programme	149
4.5.1	Learner Awareness.....	149
4.5.2	Plans and contracts.....	149
4.5.3	Skill support groups	151
4.5.4	Counselling	151
4.5.5	Record keeping and evaluation.....	152
4.6	Principles for learner training for learner autonomy	152
4.6.1	Explicitness	153
4.6.2	Reflection	154
4.6.3	Empowerment	155
4.6.4	Contextualisation	156
4.7	Conclusion.....	157
CHAPTER 5. PHASE ONE - QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS.....		159
5.1	Introduction	159
5.2	Data management and coding	159
5.3	Descriptive demographic information.....	161
5.3.1	RFAQ	161
5.3.2	PLAQ	163
5.4	Reliability	164
5.4.1	All items.....	164
5.4.2	Teachers' responsibility (TR)	165
5.4.3	Acceptance and Desire for Responsibility (ADR).....	165
5.4.4	Metacognitive knowledge (MKKS and MKLP).....	167
5.4.5	Metacognitive knowledge (MKLA and MKLC)	167
5.5	Findings from RFAQ.....	168
5.5.1	Students' learning habits.....	168
5.5.2	Teacher's responsibility	172
5.5.3	Acceptance and desire for responsibility	178
5.5.4	Metacognitive knowledge (self and learning process).....	182
5.5.5	Metacognitive knowledge (learning context and language awareness).....	187

5.5.6	Statistical tests.....	188
5.6	Findings from PLAQ.....	193
5.6.1	Teachers' responsibility.....	194
5.6.2	Students' responsibility.....	195
5.6.3	Students' ability.....	198
5.6.4	Statistical tests.....	199
5.6.5	Teachers' perspectives on promoting learner autonomy.....	205
5.7	Conclusion.....	212
5.7.1	General perceptions of the responsibilities of teachers and students in English language teaching and learning.....	212
5.7.2	Students' characteristics in relation to learner autonomy.....	214
5.7.3	Students' learning habits.....	215
5.7.4	Teachers' perceptions of promoting learner autonomy.....	216
CHAPTER 6. PHASE TWO: QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS.....		217
6.1	Introduction.....	217
6.2	Students' perceptions.....	217
6.2.1	Data management and coding.....	218
6.2.2	Data analysis.....	219
6.2.3	Overview of emerging themes.....	220
6.2.4	Discussion and Comments.....	221
6.2.5	Conclusions on students' perception of their roles in promoting learner autonomy.....	251
6.3	Teachers' perceptions.....	252
6.3.1	Data management and coding.....	253
6.3.2	Data analysis.....	254
6.3.3	Overview of emerging themes.....	254
6.3.4	Discussion and Comments.....	255
6.3.5	Conclusions on teachers' perception of their roles in promoting learner autonomy.....	274
6.4	Conclusion.....	274
6.4.1	Students' motivation and expectations vs. teachers' perceptions of their own roles in language teaching.....	275
6.4.2	Students' and teachers' awareness of learner autonomy and their perceptions of promoting learner autonomy.....	277
6.4.3	Challenges to promoting learner autonomy in a Vietnamese university.....	278

CHAPTER 7. PHASE THREE - QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS	281
7.1 Introduction	281
7.2 Learning contracts and learning diaries.....	281
7.2.1 Data management and coding.....	282
7.2.2 Data analysis	282
7.2.3 Discussion and Comments	284
7.3 Students' interviews	294
7.3.1 Data management and coding.....	295
7.3.2 Data analysis	295
7.3.3 Overview of emerging themes	296
7.3.4 Discussion and Comments	297
7.4 Evaluation of the ILTP	322
7.4.1 Benefits of using learning contract and learning diary	323
7.4.2 Learning strategies	324
7.4.3 Language improvement.....	325
7.4.4 Challenges and future use of learning contract and learning diary..	325
7.5 Conclusion.....	325
CHAPTER 8. SUMMARY OF RESULTS FROM THE STUDY	329
8.1 Introduction	329
8.2 Question 1 - How ready are students of the University for autonomous learning?.....	329
8.2.1 Q1a: What are the learning preferences of the University's students with regard to learner autonomy?	329
8.2.2 Q1b: What do the University's students perceive of their ability and confidence in learning?	330
8.2.3 Conclusion	332
8.3 Question 2 - How motivated are the University's students to learn English?.....	333
8.3.1 Q2a: What kind of motivation do the students have?.....	334
8.3.2 Q2b: What is the role of autonomy and self-efficacy in motivating the students?	334
8.3.3 Conclusion	335
8.4 Question 3 - How is learner autonomy perceived and practised by teachers and students in the context of tertiary education in Vietnam?.....	336
8.4.1 Q3a: What roles do the students perceive that they play as learners (in relation with the teacher)?.....	336

8.4.2	Q3b. What roles do teachers perceive that they play in relation with the students?.....	337
8.4.3	Q3c. What autonomous learning strategies do students use in English language learning?.....	339
8.4.4	Q3d. What do English language teachers do to promote autonomous learning?.....	340
8.4.5	Q3e. What difficulties do teachers and students perceive of when promoting autonomous learning?.....	341
8.4.6	Conclusion.....	342
8.5	Question 4 - What are the perceived effects of the learner training programme on the intervention students?.....	343
8.5.1	Q4a. What are the perceived effects of the programme on the intervention students' motivation and use of strategies, especially metacognitive and cognitive strategies?.....	343
8.5.2	Q4b. What are the perceived effects of the programme on the intervention students' beliefs, attitudes and performance?.....	345
8.5.3	Conclusion.....	346
8.6	Question 5 - To what extent is culture perceived to play a role in the development and manifestations of learner autonomy in Vietnam?.....	347
8.7	Conclusion.....	349
CHAPTER 9. CONCLUSION.....		352
9.1	Introduction.....	352
9.2	Significance.....	352
9.2.1	Theoretical contributions.....	352
9.2.2	Methodological contributions.....	357
9.2.3	Pedagogical contributions and implications for the future of TESOL in Vietnam.....	358
9.3	Limitations of the study.....	359
9.4	Suggestions for further research.....	360
REFERENCES.....		362
APPENDICES.....		377

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1: Number of B.A. in English students	100
Table 3.2: Research questions and instruments	103
Table 3.3: Items excluded from the shortened RFAQ	108
Table 3.4: Mapping the PLAQ against the RFAQ.....	114
Table 3.5: Changes to the RFAQ as a result of feedbacks from pilot teachers	123
Table 3.6: Data collection plan	129
Table 3.7 Summary of collected data.....	134
Table 5.1: Coding table for questionnaire sheets.....	160
Table 5.3: Summary of Cronbach's alpha coefficients.....	167
Table 5.4: Students' learning habits across 3 groups.....	168
Figure 5.1: Students' learning habits	171
.....	171
Table 5.5: TR scale (Non-intervention cohort vs. intervention group).....	172
Table 5.6: TR scale (Pre-intervention vs. Post-intervention).....	176
Table 5.7: ADR scale (Non-intervention cohort vs. intervention group)	178
Table 5.8: ADR scale (Pre-intervention vs. Post-intervention)	180
Table 5.10: MKKS and MKLP scales (Pre-intervention vs. Post-intervention).....	185
Table 5.11: MKLA and MKLC scales (Pre-intervention vs. Post-intervention)	187
Table 5.12: Mann-Whitney U significance test (cohort vs. pre-intervention)	189
Table 5.13: Mann-Whitney U significance test (cohort vs. post-intervention)	190
Table 5.14: Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test (pre vs. post intervention)	192
Table 5.15: Teachers' responsibility.....	194
Table 5.16: Students' responsibility.....	196

Table 5.17: Students' ability	198
Table 5.18: Group Statistics.....	200
Table 5.19: Students' perspective on the allocation of responsibility	202
Table 5.20: Teachers' perspective on the allocation of responsibility.....	203
Table 5.21: Responsibility as allocated by students	204
Table 5.22: Responsibility as allocated by teachers	204
Table 5.23: Teachers' view on promoting learner autonomy	206
Table 5.24: Teaching activities for autonomous learning (N=55).....	207
Table 5.24: Teaching activities for autonomous learning (Cont.)	208
Table 5.25: Learning activities for autonomous learning (N=44)	210
Table 5.25: Learning activities for autonomous learning (Cont.).....	211
Table 6.1: Emerging themes from student focus groups (N=18).....	220
Table 6.2: Motivation for learning English (N=18).....	221
Table 6.3: Motivating learning experiences (N=14).....	224
Table 6.4: Teachers' control (N=18)	226
Table 6.5: Perceptions of teachers' responsibilities (N=18).....	231
Table 6.6: Students' awareness of learner autonomy (N=18).....	239
Table 6.7: Preference for autonomous learning (N=18)	242
Table 6.8: Autonomy in Vietnamese tertiary education context (N=18)	249
Table 6.9: Emerging themes from teacher interviews (N=6)	254
Table 6.10: Teachers' views of their roles and responsibilities (N=6).....	255
Table 6.11: Teachers' perceptions of students' expectation and ability (N=6).....	258
Table 6.12: Teachers' awareness of learner autonomy (N=6)	260
Table 6.13: Teachers' view of learner autonomy in Vietnam (N=6).....	264
Table 6.14: Teachers' practice in promoting learner autonomy (N=6)	269

Table 6.15: Teachers' perceptions of control in the classroom (N=6).....	272
Table 7.1: Rating of students' learning contracts (N=25).....	284
Table 7.2: Rating of students' learning diaries (N=25)	289
Table 7.3: Emerging themes from student interviews (N=25).....	296
Table 7.4: Students' learning objectives (N=25)	297
Table 7.5: Assessment of the effectiveness of using learning contract and learning diary (N=25).....	298
Table 7.6: Students' self-assessment of language improvement (N=25).....	307
Table 7.7: Students' use of learning strategies (N=25).....	311
Table 7.8: Self-direction in students' application learning strategies (N=25)	312
Table 7.9: Challenges in implementing the learning contract and writing the learning diary (N=25).....	318
Table 7.10: Future use of learning contract and learning diary (N=25)	320

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: Metacognitive knowledge for autonomy in language learning	82
Figure 5.1: Students' learning habits	148

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADR:	Acceptance and Desire for Responsibility
ILTP:	Integrated learner training programme
MKKS:	Metacognitive knowledge - oneself as a learner
MKLA:	Metacognitive knowledge - language awareness
MKLC:	Metacognitive knowledge - learning context
MKLP:	Metacognitive knowledge - learning process
PLAQ:	Perspectives of learner autonomy questionnaire
RFAQ:	Readiness for learner autonomy questionnaire
SPSS:	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TESOL:	Teaching English to Speakers of other languages
TR:	Teachers' responsibility

CHAPTER 1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the background to this research, which I conducted at a Vietnamese private university in Hochiminh city between September 2010 and January 2011. The research is an interventionist case study adopting mixed methods from a constructivist-interpretive approach. It investigated the effectiveness and implications of a learner-training programme for promoting learner autonomy in English language learning at the university. In this chapter I shall begin with a brief introduction to learner autonomy as an important educational goal of tertiary education in Vietnam. This introduction is followed by a historical account of the periods of the country's education and language policy. Then, I shall link the language education history to the discussion of the Confucian Heritage Culture in Vietnam and its influence on Vietnamese education and language classrooms. Within this socio-cultural context, I shall give a detailed description of the university where this research was conducted to set the background for the case study presented in this thesis. I shall also express my motivation for undertaking this study and discuss my role as a researcher/teacher in this research context. Finally, I shall highlight the significance of this study and present the structure of this thesis.

1.2 Learner autonomy in Vietnamese education

Learner autonomy has been a popular theme in educational research since the 1980s with a rapidly growing amount of literature (Holec, 1981; Dickinson, 1987; Pemberton *et al.*, 1996). In Vietnam, it is currently a buzzword that has been receiving increasing attention in a nationwide effort to improve the quality of tertiary education in the country. Developing the capacity for greater learner autonomy is

believed by policy makers and educationalists to be one of the main targets of the educational reform (National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 2005). This mission is especially important given Vietnam's ambition to boost economic growth and become an economically strong nation. It is hoped that if young Vietnamese are educated and trained to be autonomous in learning, they will contribute to an active workforce that is able to embark on lifelong learning and adapt to new developments and changes in the world (Q.K. Nguyen and Q.C. Nguyen, 2008).

This study examines the possibilities of fostering learner autonomy in tertiary education in Vietnam. It focuses on investigating learners' variables in relation to the educational context, including the curriculum, teaching practice, and learner training. A model for promoting learner autonomy will also be proposed, carried out and tested for its appropriateness and effectiveness. Data obtained through this intervention process will be used to provide insights into teachers' and learners' perceptions of autonomy and shed light on the issue of promoting learner autonomy in non-western contexts, such as Vietnam.

1.3 History of education and foreign language education policy in Vietnam

“Vietnam's linguistic history reflects its political history” (Denham, 1992: 61)

This statement virtually summarises and highlights the complicated nature of language issues in the history of Vietnam. In the discourse of Critical Theory, language is not only a means of communication but also a political tool that can be used to exercise power, especially colonial and imperialist, to control and dominate people (Pennycook, 1998). This has been illustrated vividly in the history of

education and foreign language teaching and learning in Vietnam, which is the focus of this section.

1.3.1 The Mandarin legacy

Learning a foreign language and learning in a foreign language are by no means recent phenomena for the Vietnamese people. For the most part of its long history, Vietnam struggled to maintain its indigenous language against linguistic and cultural assimilation from foreign invaders. The history of Vietnamese education can be dated back to Mandarin (Chinese) domination, from 111 BC to 938 AD – a period of over 1000 years. During this centuries-long period, Chinese, with its ideographic Han script, was used as the official language in Vietnam (M.H. Pham, 1994). Education was in Chinese medium and followed the Chinese models with a system of schools set up to train the children, mainly sons, of Chinese rulers and of Vietnamese aristocracy to staff the state bureaucracy. The competitive examination system, i.e., the imperial examination (Hsu, 2005), which was introduced under the Tang dynasty (618-907) in China, was also implemented in Vietnam (Wright, 2002).

Chinese influence remained strong in Vietnam even after the country became independent in 939. For example, Quoc Tu Giam, the first institution of higher education of Vietnam, was established in Hanoi in 1076 to prepare students for the imperial examination to enter the Mandarinate (Wright, 2002). The school was first reserved to teach the royal family but was later open to the public, consisting mostly of male students. Chinese continued to be the language of state and the teaching medium with Chinese textbooks (Lo Bianco, 1993, cited in Wright, 2002). Chinese influence was also reflected in the Van Mieu, the Temple of Literature, which was considered to be an important centre of Taoist-Confucian thought (M.H. Pham,

1998). In this feudal era, only children from landlords and rich families could afford formal schooling. However, middle-class and poorer families could send their children to study in small classes run by village teachers. As the society generally had respect for learned individuals and social mobility was made possible by the imperial exam system, being literate and well-versed in Chinese classical works was considered a virtue. This fondness for learning has remained a Vietnamese cultural trait until the present day (L.H. Pham and Fry, 2004).

Not until the thirteenth century was the early writing system, *Chu Nom*, developed for the Vietnamese language, which had been a vernacular language for millennia. *Chu Nom*, an indigenous adaptation of the Chinese characters to the Vietnamese spoken language but unintelligible to the Chinese, became the symbol of national identity (N.Q. Nguyen, 1993, cited in Do, 2006). However, as one had to be competent in Chinese before being able to learn *Chu Nom*, it was used by a limited number of well-educated people for literature and culture, while written Chinese was still the prevalent language for law and government (P.P. Nguyen, 1995, cited in Wright, 2002). As a result of the long period of Chinese occupation and influence, as much as 60% of the modern Vietnamese vocabulary has Chinese roots, especially words that denote abstract ideas relating to science (through translation into Chinese then to Vietnamese) and politics (Alves, 2001). However, phonetically, morphologically and syntactically, Vietnamese remains a distinct language from Chinese (*ibid.*).

1.3.2 The French colonial period

The French presence in Vietnam began soon after the arrival of European merchants and missionaries in the sixteenth century (Wright, 2002). Their interest in Vietnam increased by the end of the eighteenth century when France was in the race for

colonies with the British. They gained more influence in the country when French Bishop Pigneau helped Nguyen Anh to quell the Tay Son Rebellion and to found the Nguyen dynasty in 1802 (*ibid.*). However, after coming to power, Nguyen Anh, who then changed his name to Gia Long, reneged on his promises to give the French commercial privileges and protection to Catholic missionaries. After Gia Long, successive kings, brought up in the Confucian tradition, had similar views and even imprisoned missionaries and persecuted indigenous people who converted to Catholicism (*ibid.*). This gave the French government an excuse to make a military intervention to protect their missionaries in September 1858. After several fierce battles across the country, France gradually gained control of various areas in Vietnam and forced the feudal government to sign treaties which turned the occupied territories into French protectorates (Wright, 2002).

The presence of European missionaries in Vietnam not only brought about religious and political but also linguistic and cultural changes. A system of Romanised writing of Vietnamese called *Quoc Ngu*, which uses the Roman letters to transcribe the indigenous spoken language, was developed in the seventeenth century by the Portuguese and other European missionaries (Lo Bianco, 1993, cited in Do, 2006). About the importance of the introduction of Quoc Ngu, L.H. Pham and Fry (2004: 202) comment,

[t]his innovation was to have profound and unanticipated consequences on the evolution of education in Vietnam. This new writing system made Vietnamese language far more accessible to ordinary Vietnamese, with great implications for raising mass consciousness to foster both political and social change.

In fact, this was possible because colonial policy made *Quoc Ngu* and French the languages of official documents in 1878, with the aim of using the Romanised script as a first step to an eventual shift to French (Osborne, 1997, cited in Wright, 2002).

In 1887 the Indo-Chinese Union (*Union Indochinoise*), which consists of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, was created under the government of France (Wright, 2002). Similar to the Chinese feudalism, French colonialism subscribed to the theory of assimilation and the policy of direct rule. They wholeheartedly believed that “their colonialism was a *mission civilisatrice* which could be made to benefit the colonised as well as the colonisers” (Wright, 2002: 228). Therefore, a system of French education was established alongside the existing Confucian schools to provide western schooling to the social elite class, most of whom were the children of the landlords and aristocrats from the previous feudal era (Ngo, 1973, cited in L.H. Pham and Fry, 2004). Not only was this educational system elitist, it was also irrelevant to the social context of Vietnam because the curricula were identical to those in France (Thompson, 1968, cited in L.H. Pham and Fry, 2004). The French assimilation and civilisation of the Vietnamese people was notoriously summarised by the saying, “*Nos ancêtres sont les Gaulois*” (Our ancestors are the Gauls), which the Vietnamese students had to learn by heart.

French medium education, however, only received scant enthusiasm among the Vietnamese and was available to only a tiny proportion of the Vietnamese population. It was estimated that only about 3% of the population of 22 million people were in school in 1941-1942 (Wright, 2002: 231). The vast majority of the population was peasants or workers on plantations and in mines and received no schooling (*ibid.*). Besides, there were strong movements against the use of French. A few Confucian

schools which used Chinese still operated and were still valued by the bourgeois class, though the last of their kind was closed in 1919 (M.H. Pham, 1994). More prominently, private Vietnamese schools were founded by patriotic teachers to promote *Quoc Ngu*. One of these schools, the *Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc* (Tonkin Free School) established in Hanoi in 1907, is considered to be “in the broadest sense a popular educational and cultural movement of real significance to subsequent Vietnamese history” (Marr, 1971: 164, cited in L.H. Pham and Fry, 2004: 204). This movement added to the growing popularity of *Quoc Ngu* as it was used as a medium for the publication and dissemination of the writings of western reformists and progressive thinkers, such as Montesquieu (1689-1755) and Rousseau (1712-1778) (L.H. Pham and Fry, 2004). As L.H. Pham and Fry (2004: 204) comment, this movement “provided a progressive example of relevant and practical education oriented to social and political change”.

1.3.3 The French War (1945-1954) and the American War (1955-1975)

After seven decades of colonising Vietnam, the French governor had to accept the Japanese occupation of Indo-China in 1940, following the seizure of Paris by the Germans in World War II. During this time, Vietnam was under both the governance of France and the occupation of Japan. In March 1945, when the Allied forces advanced in the West, the Japanese demanded to control the French troops in Vietnam. When this was refused, they overthrew the French colonial government in Indochina and declared the country independent under the rule of Bao Dai, who acted as their puppet king (Wright, 2002). On September 2nd 1945, following the defeat of Japan by the Allies in battles around the world, Ho Chi Minh, the leader of the resistant force Viet Minh, led an insurgency to oust the Japanese-backed government and declared the independence of Vietnam.

After the victory of the Allies, the French returned to Vietnam to reclaim their colony. The newly established Vietnamese government led by Ho Chi Minh was only able to control the north of Vietnam for one year before being forced to retreat to the highland and rural areas near China border. The French offered to recognise the independence of Vietnam if it agreed to become part of the French Union, a form of commonwealth (Wright, 2002). However, both sides could not come to an agreement because France wanted to retain their control in the south while Ho Chi Minh wanted a unified country (*ibid.*). This led the French to wage a war to retake the north by force which lasted from 1945 to 1954.

The independence of Vietnam in 1945 had marked the new status of Vietnamese and its modern writing system, *Quoc Ngu*, as the national language of the state and education, although this was fully achieved only after the French were defeated completely at the Dien Bien Phu battle in 1954 (Do, 2006). As for foreign languages, foreign language policy in Vietnam has become “a barometer of Vietnam’s relations with other countries” since its independence (Wright, 2002: 226). During the French war, knowledge of French was “obviously not an asset” in the revolutionary areas (Wright, 2002: 233). Instead, young Vietnamese people were encouraged to learn to speak Chinese because of the military and civilian support from the People’s Republic of China (*ibid.*).

The Dien Bien Phu victory resulted in the Geneva Agreement of 1954 stipulating the withdrawal of the French troops from Vietnam and the division of the country along the 17th parallel, pending national elections. However, Ngo Dinh Diem, the Prime Minister in the South refused to participate in the national elections and took power in a *coup d’état* (Wright, 2002). The halves of the country became two politically

different regimes. This division led to the involvement of the U.S. and its Cold War rival, the USSR, in Vietnam from 1964 and brought English and Russian into the linguistic equation. In the communist North, education was organised following the Soviet model (L.H. Pham and Fry, 2004). Russian became the most important foreign language to learn. With support from the USSR, tens of thousands of Vietnamese students gained first degrees in the Soviet Union (Wright, 2002). In the capitalist South, which received strong financial and military support from America and France, English and French became the main foreign languages. While the demand for English was obvious because of the need to acquire some competence to work with the Americans, the existence of French as the second popular foreign language was attributed to the fact that French-educated people held strategic posts in the government of the South (Do, 2006). With the increasing involvement of the Americans, the elitist colonial education system in the South was also gradually replaced by one that provided greater access to facilitate economic development (Nguyen, 2007b).

1.3.4 From Reunification to 1986

The divergence in foreign language policy in the two parts of Vietnam came to an end in 1975 with the fall of Saigon, which marked the reunification of the country, and the end of the ‘American War’, as it is known in Vietnam. The unification also allowed the whole country to adopt a unified Soviet-styled educational system that had been in place in the North after the French war. As a result of the ‘American war’, Vietnam was isolated from the Western capitalist world by the US-led trade embargo. The situation was worsened because of the sour relations with China after a war broke out at the Sino-Vietnamese borders in 1979 and with other neighbours due to Vietnam’s military involvement in fighting the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia

between 1975 and 1989 (Wright, 2002). The USSR became the main supporter, trading partner, and sole provider of technical assistance and training to Vietnam. The political, economic and educational alliances with the USSR therefore made Russian the main foreign language at all levels of the Vietnamese education system (Do, 2006; Wright, 2002). In the south of Vietnam, Russian departments were founded in universities and colleges with staff coming from the north. Good students were encouraged to choose to learn Russian with the prospect of pursuing higher education in the Soviet Union (Do, 2006). As English and French were at that time generally regarded as ‘the languages of the enemies’, their use and dissemination were inevitably restricted (Phan, 2008). However, although there were quotas for foreign language education at high school, which were set by the government and were in favour of Russian, there was no overt obligation to eradicate these languages altogether and English and French were still offered to a very small proportion of students (Denham, 1992; Do, 2006).

The dominance of Russian as the main foreign language in Vietnam, supported by national education policy for political and economic reasons, continued until the early ‘90s. However, as a result of the dramatic socio-economic changes in Vietnam after 1986, this dominance gradually died out before coming to an end with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 (L.H. Pham and Fry, 2004; Do, 2006).

1.3.5 From 1986 to present

After a decade of political isolation and economic mismanagement and stagnation, the Vietnamese government decided to change political direction in 1986, marking the beginning of an era called *Doi moi* (literally translated as ‘reform’ and often referred to as ‘economic renovation’) (Wright, 2002; Do, 2006). The economy was

liberalised to become market-oriented in order to attract foreign investment. Together with the influx of foreign investment, English began to be more in demand in Vietnam, with a variety of jobs offered in foreign invested companies (Do, 2006). However, not until the early '90s did English start to undergo the explosive growth which led to an official acknowledgement of its role and status in economy and education (Denham, 1992; Do, 2006). It was estimated that 85% of foreign-language learners in Vietnam chose English in the early '90s (N.Q. Nguyen, 1993, cited in Do, 2006). With the growing importance of English as a *lingua franca*, thanks to globalisation and the increasing number of Vietnamese learners who choose English for instrumental reasons, it can be argued that it is the socio-economic demand for English in this period that has driven the national foreign language education policy (Denham, 1992; Phan, 2008).

In the past fifteen years, the spread of English has developed at an unprecedented speed in Vietnam. English is currently taught as a subject in the national curriculum from secondary level (from Grades 6 to 12, 12-18 year-old pupils) (Denham, 1992; Do, 2006). Other foreign languages are Russian and French, but some schools no longer offer these languages due to the low demand. In big cities where the standard of living is higher and English language teachers are more readily available, English can be offered in primary schools to pupils as young as 6 years old (Nunan, 2003). At tertiary level, English has gradually become the main foreign language offered to students of all non-language majors (Do, 2006, L.H. Pham and Fry, 2004). Realising the importance of English competence for employability, some universities even set an English competence level (the most popular being TOEIC[®], *i.e.*, Test of English for International Communication) that students are required to attain if they are to graduate. However, as the amount of time devoted to English in the curriculum at all

levels of state education remains relatively modest (Nunan 2003), private English language centres have mushroomed to cater for the needs of young learners, teenagers and adults who, or whose parents, strongly believe that fluency in this language is a necessity for their future career (Do, 2006). Moreover, economic development also means that more people can afford to study in overseas institutions where English is the major language of instruction. Admission to these institutions often requires a minimum TOEFL® (*i.e.*, Test of English as a Foreign Language) or IELTS® (*i.e.*, International English Language Testing System) score.

Although English has gained an important status in the national strategy for foreign language teaching and learning throughout all levels of education, as stipulated by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) of Vietnam, its rapid but poorly regulated development has revealed various problems, both in terms of management and quality assurance (Do, 2006). These problems can be summarised in the following points:

- The current English syllabi in secondary and tertiary levels, despite several major amendments, remain obsolete, unsystematic and examination-oriented with a heavy focus on vocabulary, reading and grammar (Nguyen, 2007a).
- There is discrepancy in teacher and teaching quality between urban and rural areas (Nguyen, 2007a).
- In all levels of education, there is a lack of English language teachers with good qualifications due to past foreign language policy, poor training, and excessive demand (Do, 2006).

This section has discussed the history of education and its connection with foreign language policy in Vietnam. The next section will provide more insights into the

cultural context of education, especially Confucian Heritage Culture and its influence on learner autonomy in Vietnam.

1.4 Confucian Heritage Culture and its influence on education and learner autonomy in Vietnam

The long period under Chinese domination has bequeathed enduring legacies to the Vietnamese society. The most influential of them is perhaps Confucianism. Despite the introduction of western ideology into Vietnam when the French came and the communists' effort to eradicate Confucianism as a symbol of the backward feudalist ideology, its influence can still be felt in every aspect of the superstructure of the society (P.M. Nguyen *et al.*, 2005). Confucian moral philosophy remains the guiding principle that regulates people's attitudes and behaviours and social relationships. Therefore, Vietnam is considered one of the countries within the Confucian Heritage Culture (CHC), which includes Chinese speaking countries, such as China, Chinese Taiwan, Chinese Hong Kong, Singapore and some East Asian countries, like Japan and Korea (Hsu, 2005).

In order to examine the ways in which culture influences thought and behaviour, which are directly related to education, a wide range of perspectives for conceptualising these influences have been put forward in recent publications (e.g., Brislin, 1993; Gallois and Callan, 1997; Triandis, 1995; Littlewood, 2001; Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). Littlewood (2001: 4-6), for example, outlines three perspectives: collectivism and individualism, attitudes to authority, and motivational orientation as the basis for his cross-cultural study of East Asian and European students' attitudes towards classroom English learning. In an earlier study, Hofstede (1991: 14), using data from a large scale survey of IBM employees in over fifty

countries around the world, found four dimensions of cultures which he named ‘power distance’, ‘individualism - collectivism’, ‘masculinity - femininity’, and ‘uncertainty avoidance’. According to him, these dimensions form a four-dimensional (4-D) model of differences among national cultures, which can be used to explain why people from different countries do things differently (*ibid.*). As these dimensions were generated in a ‘Western’ study conducted by a Westerner with Western questions, Hofstede and Hofstede (2005: 30) found them ‘Western-biased’ and therefore added a fifth dimension, namely ‘long-term versus short-term orientation’, which was the result of a study whose questionnaire was designed by Chinese scientists from Hong Kong and Taiwan. Laden with Confucian values as it is, this dimension is treated as a fifth universal dimension along with the four mentioned above (*ibid.*). Although Hofstede’s model of national culture has been subject to significant criticism and provoked heated debates (see McCoy, 2003 for a summary; McSweeney, 2002-b; Hofstede, 2002), his work has proved to have value in determining or predicting cultural traits (Mohammed *et al.*, 2008). Moreover, according to P.M. Nguyen *et al.* (2005), the impact of Confucianism on Vietnamese culture can be found in all dimensions of Hofstede’s model. Therefore, I find it useful to describe the influence of Confucianism on education in terms of educational ideology, the roles of teachers and learners and their beliefs and attitudes, along these dimensions.

1.4.1 Power distance

This dimension has been discussed by several researchers (e.g., Littlewood, 1999, 2001; P.M. Nguyen *et al.*, 2006) and can be used to explain the stereotypical image of the ‘obedient’ East Asian learner. According to Hofstede (1991: 28) power distance is “the extent to which less powerful members of institutions expect and accept that

power is distributed unequally”. CHC countries generally score high on the Power Distance Index, which suggests that there is a high degree of inequality in society in these countries (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). In CHC countries, the inequality of power is manifested in Confucian belief in unequal relationships which people have to accept as a basis of societal stability. These are translated into social dyads, such as teacher - student, the old - the young, parent - child, husband - wife etc., with the former having more power and receiving respect and obedience from the latter. In Vietnam, learners are supposed to ‘respect’ the teacher. This means that teachers are not only models of correct behaviour for learners to look up to but also subject experts whose knowledge should not be doubted. Therefore, ‘good’ learners are just required to sit back and listen to what the teacher is saying without the need of asking questions. As a result, the question ‘Are there any questions?’ will fall into silence as soon as it is raised.

The inequalities of authority and power between teacher and student, which are criticised for being accepted as “a normal fact of life” in some, especially East Asian, cultures (Littlewood, 2001: 5), has facilitated the maintenance of the teacher-centred pedagogy. As teachers are at the centre of authority in terms of knowledge and power, they are expected to make all decisions related to learning (P.M. Nguyen *et al.*, 2005). Teachers are considered and consider themselves as keepers of knowledge which is to be conveyed to learners (Wang, 2003). Although there is a common saying in Vietnam which goes, “One can actually learn more from their classmates than from their teacher”, few learners would take it as the truth. This power distance affects not only learners but also teachers. On the one hand, learners are reluctant and do not know how to question when offered to do so. On the other hand, teachers may not be willing or lack tactful skills to encourage and handle learners’ questions.

1.4.2 Individualism – Collectivism

Hofstede (1991: 51) defines individualism and collectivism as follows:

Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive ingroups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.

Like power distance, collectivism is also regarded as the manifestation of Confucianism in the operations of East Asian societies. Central to the ideas of collectivism and Confucianism is the maintenance of social harmony and avoidance of confrontations and conflicts among people (*ibid.*). In this respect, it is important to protect one's and others' 'face' which can be defined as the concern for "how one is evaluated by others" (Hinze, 2002: 269, cited in Ramsay, 2005: 264). Ramsay (2005: 264) contends that "[f]ace' lies at the heart of Confucian teachings on social and interpersonal relationships and, as such, maintains a high degree of salience in social behaviour and practice in Confucian-heritage cultures". This leads to various 'face' acts, such as protecting face, gaining face, and giving face (*ibid.*).

In collectivist classrooms like in Vietnam, learners feel safe and comfortable when they know that they belong to the group which, in this case, is the class. To this end, they try to be modest and avoid being different from others. This means they are not willing to risk their face by volunteering their ideas and, at the same time, try to protect others' by not criticising or offering conflicting opinions so as not to make them "to look bad/worse in public" (Haugh and Hinze, 2003: 1594, cited in Ramsay, 2005: 264). Hence, a common typical complaint about learners in East Asian classrooms is their reticence as there is a "disinclination to express views and reluctance to contribute to discussions" (Ramsay, 2005: 264-5). According to P.M. Nguyen *et al.* (2005: 7), Vietnamese learners appreciate the 'one-for-all mentality' as

for the sake of group harmony they prefer not to voice differences of opinion or explore fallacies in the thinking of others.

1.4.3 Masculinity – Femininity

Whereas CHC countries' scores are consistently clustered to one side in the power distance and individualism – collectivism dimensions, their scores scatter on both sides of the masculinity – femininity continuum. In this dimension, Vietnam is categorised as a having a feminine society where “emotional gender roles overlap: both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life” (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005: 120). However, P.M. Nguyen *et al.* (2005) argue that Confucian values can be found in the key features of education in both masculinity and femininity dimensions in Hofstede and Hofstede's model. Therefore, Vietnam has some of the masculine characteristics in education, which are deemed to be in line with Confucian values, although it is found to have a feminine society. These characteristics are ‘praise for excellent students’, ‘competition in class, trying to excel’, and ‘failing in school is a disaster’ (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005: 142). I would argue these characteristics are related to the competitive nature of educational tradition dated back to the time of the imperial exam and the strong belief that education is the best way to attain a higher socio-economic status. I shall discuss this phenomenon in relation to the notion of perseverance presented in the later section about long-term orientation (see section 1.4.5).

1.4.4 Uncertainty avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance is defined as “the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations” (Hofstede, 1991: 113). This dimension is where Hofstede's model and CHC cultures become incompatible,

especially with respect to predicting learners' attitude and behaviour. According to Hofstede and Hofstede's (2005) findings, CHC countries differ considerably in the level of uncertainty avoidance, with Japan and Korea in the top twenty-five, Taiwan in the middle and China, Vietnam, Hong Kong, and Singapore at the bottom of the list of seventy-six countries. Hofstede and Hofstede (2005: 179) observe that students from strong uncertainty avoidance countries, e.g., Japan, Korea, or Taiwan, "expect their teachers to be the experts who have all the answers". However, it has been widely accepted that this is also true for Chinese or Vietnamese students (Wang, 2003; P.M. Nguyen *et al.*, 2005). At the same time, Hofstede and Hofstede's (2005: 179) descriptions of weak uncertainty avoidance students who "despise[d] too much structure", "like[d] open-ended learning situations with vague objectives, broad assignments, and no timetables at all" cannot hold true for Vietnamese learners. It flies in the face of Hofstede and Hofstede's (2005) later findings that CHC learners are generally seen to be detail- and precision-oriented and possess a low tolerance of ambiguity (Oxford and Burry-Stock, 1995, Ramsay, 2005).

Vietnamese learners share the features of students from strong uncertainty avoidance countries; they are 'concerned with the right answers' and expect these to come from the teachers (cf. Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005: 181). As they subscribe to the teacher's status as the keeper of knowledge, they lack the confidence and desire to discover things for themselves. Even if they are motivated to do so, they still rely on teachers for the 'final answer'. As found by P.M. Nguyen *et al.* (2005), Vietnamese students prefer a detailed introduction and step-by-step guidelines from the teachers for their learning activities.

1.4.5 Long and short-term orientation

Obtained from data generated by a questionnaire designed by Chinese researchers, this dimension is also referred to as Confucian dynamism because it groups values based on the teachings of Confucius. As such, Confucian values can be found on both poles of this dimension. While the positive pole represents “a dynamic orientation toward the future”, the negative pole expresses “a static orientation toward the past and the present” (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005: 210). According to Hofstede and Hofstede (*ibid.*), Vietnam is in the top five countries that score the highest towards long-term orientation. This orientation is defined as “the fostering of virtues oriented toward future rewards – in particular, perseverance and thrift”.

With regard to education, students from short-term orientation cultures tend to attribute success and failure to luck. On the contrary, those from long-term orientation countries tend to attribute success and failure to the presence or lack of effort (*ibid.*). This thinking is popular among not only students but also parents in CHC countries. In Taiwan, for example, parents expect children to succeed studying to ‘bring glory to the family’. If one fails in school, it is because he/she has not tried hard enough (Hsu, 2005). In Vietnam, entering the university is the desire of the vast majority of high school students, be they from rich urban cities or agricultural rural areas, because higher education is widely believed to pave the way for ‘future rewards’, i.e., a socially and economically better life in the future. Therefore, the National University Entrance Exam held annually in July becomes the focus of the whole society with national information campaigns and media cover. Although there is a saying: ‘while performance in studying is the result of one’s ability, passing the exams depends on one’s luck’, this only provides an excuse for people who fail to enter the university. To many parents, students and even teachers, academic failure is

ascribed to the lack of effort. Stories of students who succeed academically despite their harsh living-condition and lack of supplementary resources and extra-curriculum evening classes are often told in the news as examples of will-power and perseverance which is seen to be one of the crucial virtues towards ‘future rewards’ in a long-term orientation culture.

In summary, this section has examined the extent to which the influence of Confucian values on the Vietnamese culture is reflected in education. Using Hofstede and Hofstede’s (2005) framework, I have demonstrated the way in which Confucianism exerts impacts on learners’ attitudes and behaviour in CHC countries in general and in Vietnam in particular. Although there is criticism about the viability of the framework and the validity of the generalisation of country culture, this discussion may be useful in providing an initial image of the Vietnamese students which can be revisited and challenged along the way. The following points summarise the main characteristics of Vietnamese students as discussed above, and as encountered in my own learning and teaching in Vietnam:

- Students tend to respect teachers as the role model, the keeper of knowledge, and the one who should decide what to learn.
- Students seem to expect teachers to be an expert in the field and know all the answers.
- Students tend to rely on teachers for clear, precise guidance.
- Students are generally reluctant to contribute personal opinions in front of the class for fear of ‘appearing bad’ in public and being different from others.
- There are great social and family expectations placed on students with regard to successful performance, which is attributed to perseverance.

Considering the viability of fostering learner autonomy in the Vietnamese education context, one may find these observations a mix of advantages and disadvantages, with the latter greater than the former. However, it has been argued that East Asian learners, including Vietnamese, are not inherently passive learners but, rather, they are confined by the “educational traditions and contexts that have influenced them” (Littlewood, 2001: 19). This argument is also supported by the findings of studies into learners’ readiness for autonomy in East Asian contexts, such as Hong Kong and Malaysia, which conclude that students are ready to take more responsibility for their own learning (Chan, 2001, Thang and Alias, 2007). The characteristics listed above also imply that a step-by-step approach towards fostering greater learner autonomy in which the teacher takes the initiative and gradually hands over the control of learning to learners may be appropriate for learner training in the Vietnamese context.

1.5 Research context

This study was conducted mainly at a private university in Hochiminh city, Vietnam. For reasons of confidentiality, the research location is referred to as ‘the University’ in this thesis. The University is a newly-established private university, with only 20 years of operation. Previously a college offering three-year programmes, it was upgraded to full university status in 2006. At the time when the study was conducted, it had approximately 7600 students in all programmes, of which around 4500 were students taking four-year bachelor programmes. The University has four main faculties, namely the Faculty of Science and Technology, the Faculty of Economics and Business, the Faculty of Languages and Culture Studies, and the Polytechnic Faculty. Unlike the long-established state-funded universities, the researched University is a relatively young, cutting-edge, private, urban university which seeks

to prepare students to integrate and work in an international environment in its mission to train new generations of talent for Vietnam in the 21st century.

The University distinguishes itself from state-funded and other private institutions in Vietnam by offering a learner-centred educational environment to students of affluent background. It operates a credit-based training system to encourage students to create their own learning programme. Students are enabled to choose the number of elective subjects to learn in addition to the prescribed core subjects for each semester and select subject teachers and class hours. The quality of teaching at the University is maintained by small class-size and students' feedback on teacher's performance. These features enable students to be active in learning as they can collaborate with each other as well as interact with the teacher. Despite the CHC educational tradition as discussed above, the learning environment provided by the University is conducive to promoting autonomous learning as it provides the conditions for students to take greater responsibility for their learning. However, this is by no means an easy process due to challenges from the wider socio-cultural context and the learning tradition which has influenced both teachers' and students' learning experience prior to entering the University. As this research was conducted in a university with unique characteristics as described above, it qualifies as a case study (Hamilton, 2011). This research design will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

1.6 The role of the researcher in the research context

This study is my attempt to tackle theoretical and practical issues that I have encountered in my career as an English language teacher in Vietnam. I started teaching English in an evening centre after I graduated from university with a BA in English Language and Literature. During the two years teaching English to young

adult learners, I found that my students were keen to learn English (hence they paid high tuition for evening classes) but lacked learning skills. A question that they often raised to me was, ‘What should I do to learn English effectively?’ At that time, as a novice teacher, I did not know how to answer, other than using my intuition and my own learning experience. After two years, I went to the UK and enrolled in the MA ELTD programme at the University of Nottingham in 2004. This course equipped me with fundamental knowledge of language acquisition, language learning theories and language teaching pedagogy. This is the period when I developed my interests in research on ‘the good language learner’ and language learning strategies (e.g., O'Malley and Chamot, 1990, Oxford, 1990). Armed with state-of-the-art knowledge about foreign language teaching and learning, I returned to Vietnam to work as a university English language teacher. I thought that if I taught my students language learning strategies, they would be able to succeed in mastering English. However, I was faced with harsh reality. I could tell my students the books they could read, the website they could use for listening or the places they could go to practise speaking English, but only a few of them could benefit from what I offered. The students still lacked something else besides learning strategies. It has come to my notice that my university students tend to rely too much on the teacher’s instructions and lack the ability to direct their own learning. As a result, they are only concerned with learning what they are taught by the teacher and fail to further improve their knowledge and skills based on what they have learned.

This study is my quest to answer the above question about how to help students learn English more effectively by using an interventionist case-study research with mixed-methods approach, taking a constructivist-interpretive stance to investigate the possibility of using learner training to promote learner autonomy at the University. As

a researcher, teacher, and employer of the University, I had both advantages and disadvantages in this research context.

In terms of advantages, I can consider myself to be an “insider” in this specific case (Burke and Kirton, 2006; Breen, 2007). Having been brought up and educated in the CHC educational context, I understand teacher’s and students’ beliefs about learning. As an English language learner and teacher, I share with them opinions about challenges to learning the language effectively in an EFL context. Being an employee of the University, I appreciate and support its effort to establish a learner-centred learning environment with the aim to provide quality education and enable students to become the ‘architect’ of their learning and succeed in life.

My role in this context, however, does entail some limitations which I needed to take into account. As I played the roles of both a researcher and a teacher, this dual role did have an effect on my relationship with the student participants. The students might have looked up to me as their teacher and tried to please me by providing me with the information they thought I was looking for. Also, due to the large ‘power distance’ – a term used by Hofstede (1991: 28) to describe “the extent to which less powerful members of institutions expect and accept that power is distributed unequally” – in the Vietnamese culture (see section 1.4.1), the students might have chosen to make only positive comments with regard to the learner training programme I implemented. These limitations were addressed by ensuring validity and trustworthiness in data collection and analysis. This issue will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

1.7 Significance of the research

The study is of significant importance to the effort to enhance the quality of tertiary education in Vietnam through the development of learner capacity for greater autonomy. Its results are expected to introduce a systematic pedagogical approach to the question of developing effective learners who are able to identify their own needs, define their own study programme, and pursue life-long learning. The research is also significant in that it provides insights into how the Vietnamese students develop autonomy in the language learning process, especially in terms of metacognitive knowledge and responsibility awareness development. It is also anticipated that data pertaining to the defining characteristics of learner autonomy in a Vietnamese university context can serve as a comparative base from which future research on learner autonomy in a Vietnamese or other contexts can be explored.

1.8 Structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of nine chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the focus of the research and provides an overview of the historical context of language education and language policy in Vietnam. The purpose of this study and its significance are also highlighted in this chapter. Chapter 2 reviews relevant literature on learner autonomy in education and its application in language teaching and learning. This chapter discusses the reasons why learner autonomy should be considered a desirable educational goal. It also highlights theoretical aspects of learner autonomy by examining different definitions, levels, and versions that have been proposed by researchers. The chapter also discusses how learner autonomy is related to motivation and different cultural contexts. Chapter 3 provides arguments for methodological choices and detailed description of the research design, including the research paradigm, data collecting methods, the research questions, the context and

participants, data collection and analysis procedures, and ethical concerns. Chapter 4 presents the rationale for activities and other details of the intervention programme, including needs analysis, teacher involvement, syllabus design, and teaching method. The findings of this study are presented in Chapters 5, 6, and 7, which underline significant qualitative and quantitative evidence obtained in the intervention and data collection process. Chapter 8 discusses how data can be interpreted to shed light on and account for the research questions. The final part, Chapter 9, highlights the significance of the main findings of the research to the promotion of learner autonomy in tertiary education in Vietnam as well as their contribution to the understanding of learner autonomy in the field of language teaching and learning. This chapter concludes the thesis by discussing the limitations of the research and how it can be utilised for future research in the field.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I shall attempt to provide a systematic review of the literature on learner autonomy by discussing its fundamental issues which are still under heated debate in the field. These issues include definitions, versions and levels of learner autonomy, cultural issues in and pedagogy for promoting learner autonomy, learner training and assessing learner autonomy. At the end of this chapter, I shall present my own view of learner autonomy based on my conception of the field through the literature. This also serves as the theoretical foundation for the training programme which I shall discuss in Chapter 4.

2.2 What is autonomy and why is it important?

2.2.1 The concept of autonomy

As predicted by Little (1991: 2), learner autonomy has more recently become a “buzz word” in literature on foreign language teaching (Irie and Stewart, 2012). The past 30 years has witnessed a substantial amount of literature devoted to attempts to define the concept, classify approaches, propose training models, and explore the applicability of learner autonomy in various educational contexts. This proliferation of accounts of learner autonomy has, nevertheless, by no means alleviated the fact that many of its fundamental theoretical, philosophical and practical tenets are far from consensus. One reason for this state of affairs is that *autonomy* is a “semantically complex” (Little and Dam, 1998: 1) term which “encompasses concepts from different domains, such as politics and education, philosophy and psychology” (Blin, 2005: 16). Etymologically, the word ‘autonomy’ has its origin

from Greek *autonomia*, which derives from *autonomos* meaning '(of a state) having its own laws' (Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 2011).

According to Lawson (1998), autonomy's natural home is in the political realm. Politically speaking, the idea of autonomy, or *autonomia*, first appeared among the ancient Greeks, together with the earliest expression of democracy (Lakoff, 1990). In this context, the term 'autonomy' can be used to define relationships between political groupings or states, as well as those between individual human beings (Lawson, 1998). Collectively, autonomy is understood as "the independence and self-determination of the community in its external and internal relations" (Lakoff, 1990: 388). In addition to its collectivist meaning, autonomy also bears individual connotations which have been embraced and emphasised by educationalists. In this respect, autonomy refers to self-determination by an individual (*ibid.*). In other words, autonomy means "freedom to determine one's own actions, behaviour, etc." (Collins English Dictionary, 1998), or simply 'freedom of action' (Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 2011).

In the field of education, I find the following definition of 'autonomy' given by the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2009) especially relevant: "the ability or opportunity to make your own decisions without being controlled by anyone else". This definition is useful in two aspects. First, it echoes definitions of learner autonomy in the field of language education by reiterating two essential constructs, namely 'ability' and 'to make a decision' (which will be discussed in section 2.3). Second, it refers to the freedom of individuals from others' control and hence underlines the central role of individuals as being in charge. To use Pennycook's (1997: 36) words, it marks "a form of self-mastery" which allows individuals to act

freely according to their will and take responsibility for their decisions. Whether this is an appropriate definition for the purposes of this study requires further consideration. However, before investigating the evolution of the concept of learner autonomy in language education through its definitions in the literature in the past three decades, I shall discuss the importance of promoting learner autonomy in the field of education.

2.2.2 Why is learner autonomy important?

Learner autonomy has become a major goal of education, especially in higher education and adult education, or even a strategic target for the sake of nation building (Sinclair, 2000a). In Europe, learner autonomy has become officially part of the mainstream in language education and assessment (O'Rourke and Carson, 2010). The growing interest in learner autonomy has been accounted for by numerous researchers (Benson, 2001, 2011; Crabbe, 1993). According to Ciekanski (2007: 112) their explanations are offered on the basis of ideological, psychological and economic arguments.

In terms of ideology, autonomy is seen as a human right which stems from the Western liberal tradition (Lakoff, 1990). In this vein, individuals have the right to make their own choices and not to be confined by institutional choices (Ciekanski, 2007). Therefore, autonomous learning is seen, particularly from the viewpoint of critical theorists, such as Pennycook (1997) and Holliday (2003), to name but a few, as “emancipatory practice, contributing to the good of individual and of the society” (Ciekanski, 2007: 112).

From the psychological point of view, when learners are in charge of their own learning they will learn better because of cognitive, social and affective aspects

involved in the learning process (Dickinson, 1987). For example, empirical research in social psychology has found that autonomy, i.e., “feeling free and volitional in one’s actions”, is a basic human need (Deci, 1995: 2). Autonomous learners are intrinsically motivated to take responsibility for their own learning and develop the skills for self-management. As a result, their learning is efficient and effective, which, in turn, nurtures their motivation (Little, 2006).

The economic argument stresses that autonomous learning is the way individuals “provide for their own learning needs” because “society cannot keep providing the high level of instruction required by industrial and commercial development through educational institutions, especially in view of rapid technical changes” (Carré, 2005, cited in Ciekanski, 2007: 112). Also, individuals need to be able to continue to learn after leaving formal education. Therefore, autonomous learning is seen as crucial for lifelong learning and for the economic health of the society.

2.3 Definitions of learner autonomy in language education

As discussed in 2.2.1, the emergence of learner autonomy in the field of language education has witnessed a considerable amount of effort being spent on theorising, defining and developing models to illuminate the concept of learner autonomy. There have been several attempts to provide a thorough review of the evolution of definitions of learner autonomy in the literature, such as Hsu (2005), Trinh (2005), Benson (2007), and L.C.T. Nguyen (2009). These researchers have offered various approaches to investigating the set of concepts used in definitions of learner autonomy. Hsu (2005: 12), for example, suggests that the term learner autonomy develops from a core concept with more layers being added over time. He contends that originally the concept of autonomy in language learning was defined as a

capacity (which will be discussed in 2.3.1 below) and has, chronologically, been added to with more components, such as *responsibility, a process, attributes, willingness, and freedom/right (ibid)*. Trinh (2005: 23), by contrast, argues that central to definitions of learner autonomy are four factors related to learners, namely *cognitive factors, affective factors, metacognitive factors, and social factors* (in original order). Whereas, L.C.T. Nguyen (2009) investigates definitions of learner autonomy in terms of their reference to: i) *capacity/ability*; ii) *qualities, responsibility, strategies, knowledge, and attitudes*; and iii) *readiness/willingness*.

In this study, I shall begin with a discussion of Holec's (1981) definition which has been widely cited as a springboard for the conceptualisation of learner autonomy as an ability, and as a capacity subsequently. Then I shall look into the concept of willingness in defining learner autonomy. I argue that learner autonomy can be conceptualised as having two core components: a capacity and willingness, which can then be elaborated and extended to include other constructs, such as responsibility, decision-making, control, readiness, beliefs attitudes, and motivation. Having said that, I am also aware that learner autonomy is a complex construct which is shaped and influenced by the wider socio-cultural context in which it is being promoted. These contextual dimensions will also be discussed later in this chapter (see section 2.7).

2.3.1 Learner Autonomy as a capacity

In the field of language education, Holec's (1981) book has often been seen as a starting point for the definition of autonomy in language learning (Dam, 1994; Gardner, 2011). Originally regarded by Holec as one of the defining goals of adult education, learner autonomy has become central to the Council of Europe's thinking

about language teaching and learning (Little, 2006). In his project report to the Council of Europe, Holec (1981: 3) defines learner autonomy as “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning” and elaborates that “to take charge of one’s own learning is to have, and to hold the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning [...]”, i.e., “determining the objectives; defining the contents and the progressions; selecting methods and techniques to be used; monitoring the procedure of acquisition (rhythm, time, place, etc.); evaluating what has been acquired”.

From Holec’s (1981) seminal definition, learner’s capacity or ability for making informed decisions about their own learning has become an emphasis of subsequent definitions of learner autonomy in language learning (e.g., Little, 1991; Benson, 1996, which will be discussed later in this section). In his review article on the concept of learner autonomy, Smith (2008) sees the term ‘capacity’ as synonymous with ‘competence’. Sinclair (2000b), however, suggests that capacity for autonomy can be conceptualised in terms of learners’ knowledge about learning. According to Sinclair (2000b), Holec has established a crucial notion in the understanding of autonomy in language learning when he posits that “[t]his ability has a potential capacity to act in a given situation – in our case learning – and not the actual behaviour of an individual in that situation” (Holec, 1981: 3). Emphasising the notion of ‘potential capacity’ in Holec’s words, Sinclair (2000b: 7) contends that “[t]his potential for learning behaviours presupposes in the learner a high degree of metacognitive awareness, i.e., knowledge about learning”. In other words, ‘capacity’ for autonomy in language learning can be categorised as metacognitive knowledge of self as learner (individual differences, likes/dislikes etc.), subject matter to be learnt (language awareness), context of learning (including environmental, resources,

political and social aspects) and processes of learning (knowledge of strategies) (Sinclair, 2000a). This categorisation of capacity has important implications for my view of learner autonomy and my learner training programme, which will be discussed further in section 2.10 of this chapter and in Chapter 4.

Benson (2007: 22) comments that Holec's (1981) definition of learner autonomy "has proved remarkably robust and remains the most widely cited definition in the field". This definition can be argued to have provided the essence of learner autonomy which is learners' central role in managing the learning process (Paiva, 2006). From the foundation laid by this definition, researchers and practitioners have proposed numerous ways to define the term, adding more perspectives to the understanding of learner autonomy in education in general and in ELT in particular. For example, according to Hsu (2005), Holec's definition also entails 'responsibility' and 'decision-making', the core constructs in subsequent conceptualisations of learner autonomy in the '80s and early 90's (e.g., Dickinson, 1987; Boud, 1988; Little, 1991). These constructs can be inferred in Holec's elucidation of his definition above.

Holec's definition holds an important status in the field of language education as it emphasises that learner autonomy is an attribute of learners (Benson, 2007). Nevertheless, this definition has also been criticised as 'restrictive' and not 'explicit' enough in its account of the cognitive aspect of the development of learner autonomy (Benson, 2001: 49). In the words of Benson (2007: 23; capitalisation in original), "although his definition explained WHAT autonomous learners are able to do, it did not explain HOW they are able to do it". This, however, seems to be a rather unfair criticism as in that case it would have to be a very long definition. For Holec, learner autonomy is an ability which "is not inborn but must be acquired either by natural

means or (as most often happens) by formal learning, i.e., in a systematic, deliberate way” (1981: 3).

Inspired by the work of Holec (1981), Little (1991) picks up on and expands the notion of autonomy as a *capacity* of the learner but emphasises the central role of psychology in the development of this capacity. According to Little (1991: 4),

[...] autonomy is a *capacity* – for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action. It presupposes, but also entails, that the learner will develop a particular kind of psychological relation to the process and content of his learning. The capacity for autonomy will be displayed both in the way the learner learns and in the way he or she transfers what has been learned to wider contexts.

This definition encompasses a level of control on the part of learner over cognitive processes in learning (Benson, 2001) and assumes that “the capacity to manage one’s own learning depends upon certain underlying psychological capacities” (Benson, 2007: 23). Little (1991) also stresses that this capacity includes metacognitive learning strategies, such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating of learning activities, and involves both the content and process of learning.

Benson (1996), however, posits that the concept of taking responsibility should be elaborated in certain contexts of teaching and learning. Taking a critical approach to autonomy in language learning, Benson develops the original notion of responsibility in Holec’s definition and defines learner autonomy as “the capacity to take *control* of one’s learning” (Benson, 2001: 47-50, my emphasis). In this model, control can be categorised into three interdependent levels: control of learning management, control of cognitive processes, and control over learning content (Benson, 1996, 2001, 2011).

In essence, early definitions of learner autonomy, such as Holec's (1981) and Little's (1991) espoused capacity, responsibility and the decision-making process. These elements are central to learner's control of cognitive processes, which is one level of Benson's (1996, 2001, 2011) three-level model. Metacognitive factors of autonomy are manifested in the other two controls, i.e., learning management and learning content. These controls refer to learner's involvement in setting goals, defining content, monitoring and assessing achievement and progress (Little, 1991: 91), which can be summarized in metacognitive terms as the capacity to self-manage their learning (Wenden, 1991). In summary, it can be observed that a focus on learner cognitive factors is characteristic of early definitions of learner autonomy, together with notions of capacity, responsibility, and the decision-making process (e.g., Dickinson, 1987; Boud, 1988; Hunt *et al.*, 1989).

2.3.2 Willingness for Learner Autonomy

In addition to the cognitive conception of learner autonomy as a capacity, learners' affective factors, including attitudes, willingness, and self-confidence, are also taken into account in definitions of learner autonomy (Trinh, 2005). These factors are also referred to as individual attributes by Hsu (2005), who adds learners' beliefs, motivation, and learning style into the list. Learners' affective factors are especially emphasised by learner training proponents. Wenden (1987), for example, posits that autonomous learners are self-confident learners who are aware of their crucial role in their language learning. This attitude enables them to acquire strategies to direct and manage their own learning. Therefore, individual attributes have been gradually incorporated into training programmes for fostering autonomy in language learning (Hsu, 2005).

Among the individual attributes listed above, Hsu (2005: 14) asserts that one of the most important elements of learner autonomy is *willingness* which, in his view, comprises intrinsic motivation, positive attitudes and beliefs. Willingness together with capacity account for “the most important ingredients [that] needed to be seriously considered in developing learner autonomy” (*ibid*). This has been firmly postulated in the so-called Bergen definition (Dam, 1995: 1) which goes:

Learner autonomy is characterised by a readiness to take charge of one’s own learning in the service of one’s needs and purposes. This entails a capacity and willingness to act independently and in co-operation with others, as a socially responsible person.

Commenting on Dam’s (1995) definition, Sinclair (2000b: 4) suggest that the inclusion of the notion of ‘willingness’ stresses the point that “irrespective of their capacity, learners will not develop autonomy unless they are willing to take responsibility for their learning”. In the same vein, Sinclair (2009: 185) observes that “a learner may have acquired a good deal of metacognitive knowledge i.e., capacity for autonomous learning but not always feel like taking responsibility” because “[t]he willingness to take control varies ... depending on a range of variables, including psychological (e.g., depression, irritation), physiological (e.g., headache), contextual factors (e.g., too much noise, not enough resources) which can influence learners any time”. Exploring learners’ readiness and willingness to learn autonomously, therefore, has become important as a crucial prior step for teachers in fostering learner autonomy (*c.f.* Cotterall, 1995; Chan, 2001; Thang and Alias, 2007).

2.3.3 Learner Autonomy as a complex construct

Benson’s (1996) critical approach has been depicted as “a ‘radical’ and ‘critical’ deviational note, which emphasised the political and social-cultural dimensions of autonomy” in the late nineties (Hsu, 2005: 14). In fact, Benson (2001: 49-50) argues

that “the essentially political and transformative character of autonomy” cannot be ignored because “control over learning necessarily involves actions that have social consequences”.

Apart from the political implications of learner autonomy, as suggested by such a critical theorist as Benson, which underline the importance of social power and control, another social factor to be mentioned is social interaction (Trinh, 2005). Learner autonomy should be seen as independent in the sense that this term is opposite to dependent, rather than synonymous with “learning in isolation” (Esch, 1997: 165). As such, learner autonomy is characterised as interdependent by some researchers (Dam, 1995; Esch, 1997; Little, 1991; 1999). This interdependence is demonstrated in the process of negotiations of meaning and scaffolding between teacher and learners and among learners themselves (Trinh, 2005). The importance of social interaction for learning in developing autonomy has also been highlighted by proponents of Vygotskian theories, such as Little (1996: 211), who asserts that “the development of a capacity for reflection and analysis, central to the development of learner autonomy depends on the development and internalization of a capacity to participate fully and critically in social interactions”.

The social dimension of autonomy recognised by Benson (1996) and Sinclair (2000a) is also reflected in the notion of social learning and social responsibility embedded in the Bergen definition mentioned above (Sinclair, 2009). In the light of sociocultural theory, a focus on the “individual in isolation”, or a consideration of the “individual only in face-to-face interactions with social agents, such as parents or teachers”, is not sufficient to understand human behaviours, such as social interaction, but it must be placed within “the prevailing political, cultural, and historical contexts” (Sinclair,

2009: 186, citing Vygotsky, 1978 and Renshaw, 1992: 21). Therefore, concepts underlying the “social basis of learning and the interactive processes that promote development”, such as scaffolding, reciprocal teaching, and collaborative learning applied in fostering autonomy, are “most closely associated with the sociocultural theory of learning” and should be located in the cultural and political context in which they are applied (Sinclair, 2009: 186, citing Renshaw, 1992).

2.3.4 Learner Autonomy in this study

Although this section is an attempt to review most of the layers or factors that were taken into accounts in definitions of learner autonomy, it must be stressed that the question about what are the most important components of autonomy in language learning remains complicated and attempts to answer it are still inconclusive (Benson, 2007). As for this study, the Bergen definition discussed above in 2.3.2 is the definition of learner autonomy which has underpinned my conceptualisation and provided the theoretical foundation for the development of the research instruments and learner training programme. Firstly, it concurs with Holec’s (1981) definition in recognising that autonomy is a construct of capacity. As I have discussed in 2.3.1, this capacity can be argued to include learners’ metacognitive knowledge (Sinclair, 2000b) which constituted the underlying framework of the students’ questionnaires and the intervention programme. Besides, this capacity is also related to conscious awareness of the knowledge of learning, conscious reflection on learning, and the use of metacognitive strategies (Sinclair, 2009). These are essential elements central to the main components of the learner training programme in this study. Secondly, the Bergen definition stresses the importance of learners’ willingness, or readiness, to take responsibility for their own learning. As noted in section 2.3.2, willingness has been recognised as a crucial factor for promoting learner autonomy among learners.

Sinclair (2009: 185) has lucidly summarised this point by asserting that “learner autonomy is a construct of capacity which is operationalised when willingness is present”. Therefore, investigating learners’ willingness for autonomy has an important part in this study and will be reported in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6. Finally, the Bergen definition also reflects the importance of sociocultural theory of learning in the conceptualisation of learner autonomy (Sinclair, 2009). In this respect, the study employs scaffolding from the teacher and collaborative learning among students to enhance learners’ capacity and develop their autonomy in the socio-cultural context of tertiary education in Vietnam. This will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

2.4 Versions of learner autonomy

As discussed in section 2.3, autonomy is a multi-faceted notion (Sinclair, 2000a), so much so that there has been a multiplicity of models of learner autonomy in the literature. Benson (1997: 18) uses the terms ‘technical’, ‘psychological’, and ‘political’ to describe three major versions of autonomy in language education. Although this classification, which observes the correspondence between ways of representing the idea of autonomy and major philosophical approaches to “the issues of knowledge and learning in the humanities and social sciences” (*ibid.*), has exerted significant influence and is increasingly cited in the literature (Blin, 2005), it has been critiqued as “fragmentary” (Oxford, 2003: 76) or “rough and confusing” (Hsu, 2005: 16). According to Oxford (2003: 76), besides favouring the political version, Benson’s (1997) model misses out the socio-cultural perspective and does not demonstrate the relationship between different versions of autonomy and important constructs of context, agency, and motivation. She therefore elaborates Benson’s (1997) models by adding sociocultural perspectives, amending Benson’s political

version, and investigating the new model in four important themes: context, agency, motivation, and learning strategies (Oxford, 2003).

In my view, Benson's (1997) model deserves credit as being the first effort to categorise versions of autonomy in a systematic fashion. However, its components are narrowly defined and the boundary between the versions proposed by this model in actual practice is not that clear-cut but rather overlapping. In more recent work, Benson (2011: 62) admits that the idea of versions of autonomy seems to become less helpful because "it often refers only to differences of emphasis within approaches that are typically oriented to learning management, psychological version of cognitive processes, and learning content at one and the same time". In addition, I find it important to stress that these versions do not necessarily exist as separate entities. In fact, most practitioners believe that autonomy encompasses all of these dimensions at the same time, but emphasised differentially at different times (Sinclair 2000a, Hsu 2005).

In this section, I shall discuss the four perspectives from which learner autonomy has been conceptualised according to Oxford's (2003) model, i.e., technical, psychological sociocultural and political perspectives. However, similar to Benson's (1997) model discussed earlier, it is important to note that "while it is useful to distinguish the different perspectives mentioned above ... in real educational settings such perspectives are not black and white alternatives" (Holliday, 2003: 4).

2.4.1 Technical

In Benson's words, the technical version is confined to "the act of learning a language outside the framework of an educational institution and without the intervention of a teacher" (1997: 19). In light of this, there is a need to provide learners with the

learning skills and techniques to be able to cope with situations where they have to be in charge of learning. Oxford (2003: 81), however, argues that those situations can also refer to a self-access centre, a classroom, a home setting, or a travel environment. In her view, it is important to create situational conditions for promoting learner autonomy, i.e., ‘other-created’ conditions which are not “initially initiated by learners” (*ibid*). In this context, developing learner autonomy is seen as “a matter of handling over the reins, of giving students greater control over the curriculum, of giving them greater control over or access to resources, of letting them negotiate what, when, and how they want to learn” (Pennycook, 1997: 46).

According to Benson (1997), this approach can be placed within the framework of positivism, which occupies a pre-eminent position in the history of philosophy. Coined by Auguste Comte (1798-1857) in the middle of the 19th century, this term refers to a philosophy and an epistemological perspective which holds that the only authentic knowledge is that which is based on actual sense experience (Bryman, 1988). In this sense, positivism can be said to be represented by quantitative approaches in science (Hsu, 2005). Positivism postulates that knowledge is independent of human subjectivity and reflects objective reality (Benson, 1997; Sinclair, 2000a). From this perspective, similar to knowledge, language “is thus construed a direct representation of objective reality” and therefore “constitute[s] the underlying framework for structural, drill and practice approaches to language teaching methodologies” (Benson, 1997: 20). In this vein, the main concern of the positivist, technical version of learner autonomy is to equip learners with skills and techniques (*ibid*). Learning strategies, like knowledge, can be imparted from teacher to learners so that they can be used subsequently to learn autonomously. However, this has led to misconception of the term ‘learner training’, i.e., the techniques and

procedures used in pro-autonomy pedagogy, which is criticised (e.g., by Benson, 1996, 1997) as an example of this reductive, ‘technical’ version of autonomy. This claim is challenged by Sinclair (2006: 21), who posits that “training learners in the specific strategies they require in order to function successfully without a teacher” is only part of developing the capacity for autonomy – not a specific version of autonomy. She goes on to argue that this technical view can be considered as an approach to learner training “at one extreme of continuum, with a broader, more educative and developmental version at the other” (Sinclair, 2006: 22). In fact, ‘learner training’ exists in multiple different versions which are influenced by context-related factors, such as learners and teachers’ beliefs about language and language learning, the socio-political environment, the educational system and its constraints, and the teachers’ interpretation of autonomy and learner training (*ibid.*).

2.4.2 Psychological

In the psychological version, autonomy is defined as a capacity, “a construct of attitudes and abilities which allows learners to take more responsibility for their own learning” (Benson, 1997: 19). Therefore, the psychological perspective interests in investigating mental and emotional characteristics of learners and relating them to the development of autonomy. As noted by Oxford (2003: 83), psychological research reveals that autonomous learners have high motivation and self-efficacy. According to Benson (1997), this focus on learners’ factors, such as attitudes, motivation, learning style is in line with constructivist approaches to language learning which place much emphasis on the role of learners in the process of constructing their own version of the target language.

Constructivism is often placed in contrast to positivism for its pronouncement that knowledge is “‘relative’ and actively constructed and modified by the individual through interaction with the social environment” (Glaserfeld, 1984, 1987; Kilpatrick, 1987 cited in Sinclair, 2000a: 67). Although there are differing interpretations of constructivism (see Sinclair, 2000a; Hsu, 2005 for a fuller discussion of schools of constructivism), “constructivists all view learning as an intelligent, conscious and active process, and learning is achieved by means of grasping the meanings of things in a way that can be transferred for the solution of new problems” (Hsu, 2005: 18). This perspective therefore allows constructivism to be regarded as a relevant philosophical framework for the psychological version of autonomy (Benson, 1997).

2.4.3 Sociocultural

Oxford (2003) took the interactional aspect of the knowledge construction process, the ‘psychological dimension’ of Benson’s (1997) model, to form a ‘sociocultural perspective’ on learner autonomy. In her model, this perspective consists of two related aspects, Sociocultural I and II. Sociocultural I’s foundation rests on Vygotskian sociocultural theory. From this perspective, context has an important role as it specifies learning and consists of social relationships and interactions constituting mediated learning. However, agency – a person’s ability to act intentionally – is seen as tantamount to learners’ cognitive development and self-regulation which is facilitated through contact with and assistance from more capable others (Oxford, 2003). Sociocultural II, in spite of having a similar concern with mediated learning, places more emphasis on “the context of autonomy” that stems from the work of Rogoff and Lave (1984). This context is referred to as “community of practice” (Lave and Wenger, 1991) with the presence of practitioners or old-timers who help learners to become its member. This community can be an actual one in

which learners are immersed or an imagined (desired) community which is related to learners' "symbolic and emotional investment" (Norton, 2000 cited in Oxford, 2003: 87).

In summary, both aspects of Oxford's (2003) 'Sociocultural' emphasise the importance of interaction for the development of human capacity (Oxford, 2003: 86-87). In this sense, the development of autonomy in learning is placed within a wider socio-cultural context in a particular place and time with dynamic interactions between learners and either 'more capable other[s]', 'old-timers' or the context itself. Through 'scaffolding' and 'cognitive apprenticeships', learners (or newcomers) receive assistance and 'insider' knowledge, cultural understanding, practice, and strategies to develop self-regulatory abilities and participate fully in the socio-cultural context (Vygotsky, 1978; Rogoff and Lave, 1984 cited in Oxford, 2003). According to Hsu (2005), Oxford's sociocultural perspectives on learner autonomy are seen as related to social-constructivism as the latter emphasises interaction and engagement with other users of the target language, which is deemed vital for learners to be able to move to higher stages of autonomy, as well as language proficiency.

2.4.4 Political-critical

According to Oxford (2003: 88), the political-critical perspective "centrally involves issues of power, access, and ideology". This perspective is exemplified by Pennycook (1997), who questions the universal appropriateness of "student-centred, individualistic, and autonomous learning" (Oxford, 2003). In contrast to the 'reductionist' view, which "divorce[s] language teaching from politics", this perspective examines the problematic nature of context in terms of difference in attitudes and ideologies found in specific social groups (i.e., age, gender, class,

religion, culture) (Benson, 1997: 32). In the political-critical perspective, these are the issues to be addressed in any efforts to define and promote learner autonomy. Oxford's version of political perspective seems broader and more complex than that of Benson, who, taking individual beliefs and actions and their institutional, social contexts into account, simply postulates that autonomy entails learners' "control over the processes and content of learning" (1997: 19).

The issues of power, together with control, are also the main themes of interest of Critical Theory, which has been associated with the Frankfurt school of philosophy and scholars, such as Foucault, Habermas, Adorno (Sinclair, 2000a). Critical theorists see knowledge and power as 'inextricably linked' (Sinclair, 2000a: 79) and that knowledge "consists of competing ideological versions of that reality expressing the interests of different social groups" (Benson, 1997). In this sense, knowledge is not a 'neutral reflection of objective reality' but is highly political (Sinclair, 2000a: 79). Critical Theory has highlighted the need for awareness of ideological aims of autonomy and the social, cultural and political context in which the promotion of autonomy takes place (Benson, 1997; Pennycook, 1997). However, this view may seem problematic and its argument for 'social empowerment' through learner's control of their learning unrealistic (Sinclair, 2000a: 81). Therefore, a moderate view of critical theory is, perhaps, more appropriate.

Critical theory in learner autonomy, then, relates to the uncovering of the learners' inhibitions and constraints in relation to the learning process and to enabling them consciously to construct approaches which maximise their own learning and personal potential within their own learning context. (Sinclair, 2000a: 82)

2.5 Levels of autonomy

Although the question of defining learner autonomy in language learning in terms of its key components is still open to debate, there is an assumption that has achieved

widespread consensus (Benson, 2007): there are ‘degrees of autonomy’ (Nunan, 1997: 192). Nunan (1997: 195) proposes a five-level model of ‘learner action’, which consists of ‘awareness’, ‘involvement’, ‘intervention’, ‘creation’, and ‘transcendence’. While this classification, which involves dimensions of ‘content’ and ‘process’, has practical implications to learner development materials, its hierarchical nature is problematic as there are “overlaps and learners will move back and forth among levels” (Hsu, 2005: 99).

Another model has been promoted by Littlewood (1997), who takes a broader contextual approach. Unlike Nunan’s (1997) model, which is circumscribed within the framework of language learning, Littlewood’s (1997: 81) model has three stages involving dimensions of language acquisition, learning approach, and personal development (Benson, 2007). These dimensions reflect an individual’s autonomy as a communicator, a learner, and a person, i.e., a social member (Littlewood, 1997: 81). In this model, autonomy as a person is regarded as a higher level goal.

Whatever models are proposed to conceptualise levels of autonomy, one thing that has been contended by Little (1991: 3) is that autonomy is “not a steady state achieved by learners once and for all”. In other words, learners’ willingness to engage with autonomy fluctuates considerably, from time to time, task to task and a whole range of other variables. Learners are likely to be autonomous in one learning situation, but not necessarily in another, and at certain stages in their learning, they may well choose to be dependent on their teachers (Kjistik, 1997; Sinclair, 2000a,b). This contention poses a significant challenge to this study in terms of promoting and maintaining autonomy among university students and measuring the level of

autonomy they attain at the end of the intervention programme. These issues will be dealt with respectively in Chapter 4 and section 2.9.

2.6 Learner autonomy and motivation

It has been widely agreed that motivation plays an important role in determining human behaviour and thus enables language learners who are motivated to reach a certain level of proficiency, regardless of their intelligence or language aptitude (Nakata, 2006). From a social-psychological viewpoint, Gardner and Lambert (1972: 135) assert that learners who are motivated by the will “to identify with members of another ethnolinguistic group and to take on very subtle aspects of their behaviour, including their distinctive style of speech and their language” will be more likely to succeed in language learning as this will sustain better long-term motivation. This willingness to associate oneself with the target language community is termed ‘integrative motivation’ and is in contrast with the ‘instrumental motivation’ which reflects “the practical value and advantages of learning a new language” (*op. cit.*: 132). However, although this social-psychological agenda has been influential in research into language learning motivation, its underlying argument, which sees language learning as different from learning school subjects because of its social-psychological dimension, has been found limited in its scope and no longer relevant in a globalised world in which English has become an international language (Dickinson, 1995; Ushioda, 1996; Dörnyei, 2009). Therefore, a more general distinction of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation based on cognitive motivational theory has been suggested (Dickinson, 1995). The link between intrinsic/extrinsic motivation and learner autonomy will be discussed below.

From a cognitive psychological viewpoint, Keller (in Crookes and Schmidt, 1991: 398, cited in Dickinson, 1995: 168, my emphasis) defines motivation as “the *choices* people make to what experiences or goals they will approach or avoid, and the degree of *effort* they will exert in that respect”. This definition represents a conscious decision-making process whereby learners make a choice toward a goal and commitment in effort to achieve that goal. Dickinson (1995: 168) suggests that a strong link between learner autonomy and motivation can be perceived in self-determination theory which centres on the intrinsic/extrinsic motivations and in attribution theory. According to Deci and Ryan (1985), when people are intrinsically motivated they do an activity for its own sake in order to experience pleasure or satisfaction rather than because of external pressure or promise of reward (i.e., extrinsic motivation). In education, intrinsic motivation is more desirable because it is believed to lead to more effective learning. Quoting Deci and Ryan (1985: 261), Dickinson (1995: 169) suggests that intrinsic motivation and learner autonomy are strongly linked because the former is promoted in “circumstances in which the learner has a measure of self-determination and where the locus of control is clearly with the learner”. Therefore, self-determination is related to the concept of learner autonomy “in its sense of a capacity for and an attitude towards learning” (*ibid.*).

Relating to attribution theory, Dickinson (1995: 168) quotes Wang and Palincsar (1989) as asserting that

motivation to learn and learning effectiveness can be increased in learners who take responsibility for their own learning, who understand and accept that their learning success is a result of effort, and that failure can be overtaken with greater effort and better use of strategies.

In the same vein, the relationship between taking responsibility, a core construct of learner autonomy, and motivation suggested in the quote above has been strongly

reaffirmed by Ushioda (1996: 2), who contends that “autonomous language learners are by definition motivated learners”. According to Dickinson (1995: 171), attribution theory has important implications for the promotion of learner autonomy as it suggests that helping learners to recognise that “factors within their control may be responsible for their success or failure” can improve learning effectiveness. This suggestion lends itself to my main conception of learner autonomy which centres on developing learners’ metacognitive knowledge to enhance a greater control of learning factors and may be culturally appropriate to the Vietnamese context, which attaches great emphasis to will-power and perseverance (see section 2.3.4 and 2.7.2).

2.7 Learner autonomy in context

2.7.1 The East-West dichotomy

With the increasing number of publications and conferences on learner autonomy, there has been a widespread concern about whether the concept, taking its roots from the Western liberal-democratic tradition, is universally appropriate, especially in socio-cultural contexts that are reckoned to be acutely disparate from its origin (e.g., Jones, 1995; Pennycook, 1997; Littlewood, 1999). Within the ELT community, which is also heavily dominated by discourses from the west, reservations in the recognition of autonomy can be felt, as it may seem to be “no more than the latest vogue in language teaching” (Smith, 2002: 14). These issues will be discussed in this section.

2.7.2 Seeds of autonomy in the West and the East

To start with, it is necessary to stress that autonomy is not a newly invented concept in western education. Smith (2002: 14) cites Claude Marcel (1793-1876), “an early but neglected pioneer in the development of a principled, educational basis for

modern language teaching”, who says “[o]ne of the chief characteristics of a good method consists in enabling learners to dispense with the assistance of a teacher when they are capable of self-government” (Marcel 1853: 203, cited in Smith, 2002: 15). According to him, Marcel’s view was influenced by Joseph Jacotot (1770-1840), who sees education as ‘intellectual emancipation’. Therefore, he concludes that

[i]n the history of western education, then, a focus on developing learner autonomy is not as new as is commonly supposed, although it has probably never been particularly widespread in practice and notable proponents including Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Froebel as well as Jacotot and Payne, conveyed the ideas without using the word ‘autonomy’ (*ibid*).

Similarly, although autonomy in education was first introduced as a western concept, its variable forms have been advocated and practised by eastern philosophers for a long time (Pierson, 1996). Hsu (2005: 22) claims that autonomy has been implemented and promoted implicitly and explicitly through the implementation and promotion of autonomy-related concepts, such as individual differences, learner training, rights to learn, self-learning etc. in Chinese history. However, unlike the western view of autonomy, which stresses the role of education (and educators) in empowering learners to be autonomous, the eastern accounts of autonomy as presented in Pierson (1996) and Hsu (2005) seem to assume that it is the learners who somehow need to acquire the capacity for autonomous learning by themselves. I may therefore argue that this discrepancy is an important factor to take into account in promoting learner autonomy in eastern cultures.

2.7.3 Cultural issues in learner autonomy

As autonomy has gradually gained its mainstream status in foreign language learning in the west and started to be promoted in other parts of the world, several

practitioners have voiced concerns over the cultural appropriateness of learner autonomy as a goal of language teaching (Pemberton *et al.*, 1996; Riley, 1988). The socio-cultural context in which learning takes place has also come under scrutiny as Benson and Voller (1997) question if autonomous and self-directed learning schemes are based on ethnocentric principles and practice and if there are any ethnic or social groups whose cultural background predisposes them for or against such approaches. These questions are sensible given a popular view about non-western learners that sees them as “conditioned by a pattern of cultural forces that are not harmonious to learner autonomy, independence or self-direction” (Pierson, 1996: 52). A good example of this is the question of whether such a westernised approach as learner autonomy, which is often regarded as focusing on the individual, is appropriate to collectivist cultures, such as China and Taiwan (Hsu, 2005: 39). In fact, this reservation is part of a monolithic view of culture, which is so often taken by researchers to describe Asian cultures as emphasising “tradition, homogeneity, harmony, and group behaviour” in contrast with the upholding of “individualism, self-expression, and critical thinking” of Western culture (Kubota, 1999: 11-12). According to Kubota (1999: 16), this form of essentialism can be traced back to powerful “discourses” or a naturalised “power-knowledge” combination (Foucault, 1980) that “cast Orientals as maximally different, irreducibly other, and inevitably inferior vis-à-vis Westerner”. In the same vein, Palfreyman (2001: 55-56) notes this mirrors “(neo)-colonialist representations of the evolution of cultures”, in which “learners from different national backgrounds are represented evaluatively (and often simplistically) in the literature of education, usually according approval to supposedly ‘Western’ values, such as initiative, and devaluing dogged ‘rote learning’”. This “received view” of culture in education falls under criticism by Atkinson (1999: 627),

who posits that “cultures are anything but homogeneous, all-encompassing entities”. Moreover, such stereotypical descriptions of Asian learners as ‘passive’, ‘reticent’, or ‘teacher-dependent’ which abound in ELT literature in the 90s no longer stand up to recent counter-accounts (e.g., Aoki and Smith, 1999; Cheng, 2000; Littlewood, 2000; Chan, 2001; Finch, 2011; Murase, 2011) which show that Asian learners are capable of active and autonomous learning. As noted by Esch (1996: 46), “cultural differences may not be the main barrier to the promotion of the concept of autonomy in countries with a group-oriented tradition such as China”.

In contrast to the monolithic, essentialist view of cultural issues in autonomy discussed above, there have been attempts to universalise autonomy by the processes of decontextualisation, technologisation, psychologisation and naturalisation (Schmenk, 2005). According to Schmenk (2005: 112-13), these processes involve the spread of computer assisted language learning to promote situational independent learning in self-access centres and the attempts to use learner training to link autonomy and language learning strategies with the view that learners are “individual language processors who have to learn how to learn individually and most efficiently”. The universalisation of autonomy has been criticised for attempting to turn learner autonomy into a culture free notion which is “a universally ‘good thing’ for everyone, irrespective of the social and cultural context in which it is applied” (Pennycook, 1997: 40). Schmenk (2005: 114-15) warns that “[i]f people neglect the fact that autonomy is far from being a culturally and politically neutral notion, they risk exposing it to various other uses (or misuses) – none of which are neutral”. She therefore calls for people to “reflect on the theoretical and practical background of autonomy as a cultural and political concept and seek to locate it in specific social and cultural settings” (*ibid.*).

In response to the call for intercultural dialogues among applied linguists and language educators to deal with “more specific questions about the potential forms of personal autonomy to be fostered in particular environments of language education” (Schmenk, 2005: 116), there has been a growing amount of literature concerning the conceptualisation and application of autonomy in various cultural settings. Specifically, some noticeable studies on learner autonomy in Confucian Heritage countries in Asia are Hsu (2005), Jing (2006), Dang (2010), Gao (2010), Lo (2010), Murase (2011), and L.C.T. Nguyen and Gu (2013). These studies report some context-related findings that I find relevant to my studies. For example, the product-oriented view of learning as an end-product (Jing, 2006; Lo, 2010) in China and Taiwan can be related to the reluctance to keep learning diaries among students in this study (see section 7.3.4.5). The gradual transfer of responsibility from the teacher to the learner recommended by Lo (2010) Taiwan and L.C.T. Nguyen and Gu (2013) in Vietnam lend support to the teacher-guided/learner-decided approach adopted in this study. Finally, the finding that “even local teachers may not fully understand their students unless they make the effort to listen to their voices” in Murase’s (2011: 79) study in Japan seems to be relevant to the mismatch between students’ expectation and teachers’ perceptions of learner autonomy as evidenced in this study (see section 6.4.1).

In this study, I agree with Little and Dam (1998: 1) about “the existence of human universals” and that “human beings have a tendency to strive after autonomy within the limits imposed by their inescapable interdependence”. This stance accommodates learners at a micro-cultural level, i.e., as individuals, while recognising the interaction between them and the wider socio-cultural context (Dang, 2010). Therefore, learner autonomy is an appropriate goal in all cultural settings (Murase, 2011) but “it must

grow, quasi-organically, out of the ongoing encounter between critical goals of the educational enterprise and the particularities of cultural context” (Little, 1999: 15-16). This position is also advocated by Stewart and Irie (2012: 3), who posit that “in any system of education, learning is a question of personal development and growth and social conformity, two trajectories which are not necessarily, if ever, identical”.

2.7.4 Learner Autonomy in the EFL classroom

2.7.4.1 *Concerns in applying learner autonomy*

Although learner autonomy has been proved to be a desirable goal of education and justified on the grounds of ideology, pedagogy, psychology and economics (see section 2.1) it has been critiqued for its lack of a sound theoretical base and rigorous research findings in applied linguistics (Benson and Voller, 1997: 3; Hill, 1994: 214). According to Finch (2000), besides the cultural issues mentioned in the previous section, current concerns with regard to the promotion of learner autonomy stem from pedagogic and political perspectives.

Pedagogic questions include whether self-directed learning is perceived by learners as helping them to develop autonomous learning skills (Gremmo, 1995; Caef, 1991), what are the academic situations in which learner autonomy is an appropriate goal (Pemberton *et al.*, 1996), whether teaching learners to be autonomous impedes their autonomy (Benson and Voller, 1997). Other pedagogic concerns centre on how to promote learners’ freedom in terms of deciding what and how to learn within the constraints of formal educational institutions e.g., exam-led institutions.

From the political perspective, the implementation of learner autonomy is problematic because of the discrepancy between the narrowly defined personal learning needs and what the critical theorists consider to be the ultimate goal of

learner autonomy, which is to “empower learners to use their learning to improve the conditions they and those around them live and work in” (Hammond and Collins, 1991: 14; Brookfield, 1993: 28). Pennycook (1997: 38) challenges the notion of a free-willed, rational and autonomous individual by claiming “we have far less control over what we do or say than is suggested in the model of the rationally autonomous being”. He then goes on to question the extent to which such notions as “individual” or “rationality” are products of the discourses of European modernity (*ibid.*).

2.7.4.2 Promoting learner autonomy in the EFL classroom

With learner autonomy being a desirable goal of education, there has been a profusion of approaches to promoting it by proponents and practitioners. In the field of ELT, there is a shift from the provision of situational opportunities for learners to practice autonomy outside the classroom, such as self-access centres or CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) which received much interest in the 1990s, to in-class arrangements like provision of choice, change of teachers and learners’ roles and learner development. In fact several proponents posit that the (language) classroom is where learner autonomy begins (e.g., Sinclair and Ellis, 1984; Nunan, 1997). Allwright (1988) suggests that the individual’s learning agenda and even the learner’s errors and questions can be seen as the learner’s autonomous classroom behaviour. In-class approaches to learner autonomy can be classified as curriculum-based, teacher-based and learner-based.

According to Benson (2011), the curriculum-based approach seeks to promote autonomy by attempting to involve learners in decision making processes at the curriculum level. In essence, learners are encouraged to choose learning content and method. Proponents of this approach argue that allowing learners’ choice facilitates

learners' decision making, flexibility, adaptability and modifiability. This helps learners learn how to make informed choices as learners are entitled to reflect on their learning experience (Lee, 1998; Cotterall, 1995).

The teacher-based approach is characterised by a change in the role of teachers from an informer, knowledge keeper to a facilitator and counsellor. The process of role-changing is a gradual one where the teacher helps learners to develop awareness of the learning process, practice an attitude of responsible learners and gradually take over some roles from the teacher (Scharle and Szabó, 2000). In the same vein, Nunan (1997: 195) also proposes a five-level framework to encourage learner autonomy (see section 2.5). In this framework, two sets of complementary goals, i.e., content and learning process goals, can be attained in language learning programmes by incorporating them into teaching materials.

The learner-based approach focuses on bringing about behavioural and psychological changes that are necessary for learners to be able to take greater control over their learning (Benson, 2011). This aim is manifested in the promotion of learner development, which takes its roots from self-directed language learning in Europe and learner strategy training in North America (Wenden, 2002). Basically, learner development seeks to equip learners with strategies to develop control over learning management, i.e., metacognitive strategies, social strategies, and cognitive strategies (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990) and proposes ways to incorporate these elements into the process of language learning.

Benson's (2011) classification provides a neat way to conceptualise in-class approaches to learner autonomy. Nevertheless, such distinctions can sometimes be misleading. One can think learner training for learner autonomy is merely a learner-

based approach while in fact it commonly incorporates the three approaches mentioned.

Asserting that “the goal of all education is to help people think, act and learn independently in relevant areas of their lives”, Littlewood (1996: 434) defines three domains to develop in his framework. These domains are autonomy as a communicator, as a learner and as a person. Central to this framework are the four basic components of autonomy, namely motivation, confidence, knowledge and skills. In the framework, the domains are further broken down into six areas of autonomy that learners need to develop, namely linguistic creativity, communication strategies, learning strategies, independent work and creation of personal learning contexts, and expression of personal meaning. Based on this framework, Littlewood (1996: 432) proposes a “coordinated strategy” with some considerations and activities for teachers to help learners develop autonomy in these areas. They include, for example, clarifying the relationship of tasks to students’ own needs and objectives, familiarising them with the knowledge and skills involved in carrying out tasks, creating a non-threatening atmosphere etc.

In search for a culturally ‘appropriate pedagogy’ for autonomy, Smith (2002) suggests that there are ‘weak’ and ‘strong’ versions of pedagogy. In his view, “technological (i.e., focusing on self-access centre) and strategy training-based suggestions may constitute a mainstream, deradicalised, or ‘weak’ version of developing learner autonomy” which “are being marketed in non-western (as in western) context” (Smith, 2002: 19, 22). He stresses that these weak approaches should be avoided and goes on to advocate a ‘strong version’ of pedagogy, which somehow is similar to the teacher-based approach discussed above in that it stresses

“a conscious attempt on the part of the teacher to shift the initiative in decision-making to classroom learners” (Smith, 2002: 18). This strong version is believed to be appropriate to a ‘bottom-up strategy’ which calls for “more teacher-research and less theorising from stereotypes or abstract principles in order for appropriate pedagogy to be developed, and for sensible things to be said about learner autonomy in non-western contexts” (Smith, 2002: 20). However, like Benson’s (2011) distinctions of approaches to promoting learner autonomy discussed above, Smith’s (2002) ‘weak’ and ‘strong’ versions seem to be judgemental and require more critical discussion. In my opinion, although Smith’s (2002) division helps to highlight the importance of teachers shifting the initiative in classroom-based decision-making to learners, this division does not necessarily exist. In practice, a pedagogy for promoting learner autonomy could be mainly based on one or two approaches discussed above, but it is not uncommon that such a pedagogy also draws from others to ensure that learners develop the capacity and willingness for greater autonomy.

2.8 Learner training

2.8.1 Learner training for the development of learner autonomy

Although learner autonomy has achieved full status in mainstream research in the field of language teaching and despite the resulting massive body of literature, practitioners and teachers are still perplexed about how to promote it in their classrooms. Much has been discussed and written about learner autonomy in language teaching in terms of its definitions, models, versions, levels, etc. Nevertheless, as Hsu (2005: 61) comments, “few systematic and pedagogically applicable theories have been proposed to account for the development and implementation of learner autonomy”. One conclusion that can be drawn from the literature on learner autonomy however, is that autonomy cannot simply be promoted

by the introduction of conditions for learners to work independently of the teacher. In other words, setting up self-access centres or passing decision making responsibility to learners do not necessarily make them autonomous. Learners need to be prepared for and guided through a gradual process to be able to learn autonomously. This preparation often takes place in the forms of language learning counselling facilities in the case of self-access learning or in-class learner training (or learning to learn). No matter what forms it may take, the main objectives of this process should be to develop learners' capacity for self-directed learning and enhance their willingness to take more responsibility for their learning, which are considered to be crucial elements to the development of learner autonomy (Little, 1991; Sinclair, 2000a, b). Based on the assumption that learner autonomy is not an innate ability but must be acquired by 'natural' means or by formal learning (Holec, 1981), it is believed that these two elements can be developed "through proper and deliberate methods by learners themselves or others" (Hsu, 2005: 87). The techniques and approaches to helping learners develop greater autonomy can be referred to as pro-autonomy pedagogy, and is most often termed 'learner training'. This section aims to justify why learner training can be seen as a 'proper' method for the purpose of promoting learner autonomy.

2.8.2 Learner development vs. learner training

Learner development can be defined as, "cognitive and affective development involving increasing awareness of oneself as a learner and an increasing willingness and ability to manage one's own learning" (Sheerin, 1997: 59). According to Benson (2001, 2011) and Wenden (2002), learner development has merged from two major schools: strategy training and learner training. While both schools seek to improve the effectiveness of learning, they differ in their approach to achieve this goal. The first

school, strategy training, is associated with the emergence of research into good language learner and learner strategies in North America (Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975; Naiman *et al.*, 1978; Rubin and Thompson, 1982). Taking a “relatively positivist and cognitive” view of language learning, this school focuses on teaching learners specific strategies or skills to “enhance the processing of learning required to complete concrete pedagogical tasks” (Wenden, 2002: 37). The second school, learner training, takes its roots in adult education in Europe and holds a more humanistic and socio-constructivist stance (Sinclair, 2000a, Hsu, 2005). Besides aiming to promote effective learning, this school emphasises learners’ self-direction and responsibility through the process of conscious reflection on and experimentation with different learning strategies because they are the keys to life-long learning. Therefore, this school seems to be more strongly related to learner autonomy (Hsu, 2005). However, it should be noted that the North American school has moved more towards the European school in recent years as it has started to encompass metacognition and responsibility (Hsu, 2005). As a result, despite the different terminology, they basically now mean the same thing in terms of learning to learn content and approach. Benson (2011: 154) supports the use of the term ‘learner development’ in the similar sense to Sheerin (1997) but expands it to cover ‘the broad range of practices involving training, instruction, and self-directed development over the past two decades’.

In this thesis, learner training is taken to refer to the broader sense (Sinclair, 2006) and is used as a synonym for learner development and learning to learn. Sinclair (2006) comments that the term ‘learner training’ is debatable among proponents of autonomy in language learning. Consequently, other terms, such as ‘learner development’, ‘learning to learn’, ‘learning learning’ and “promoting autonomy”,

have been suggested to replace the term ‘training’ for it seems to some to be “too narrowly and too functionally focused” (*op.cit* : 22). Esch (1997: 165), while using the term ‘training’ in her book chapter, also notes that,

[t]here are no ‘autonomous learning skills’ to be trained and, indeed, the word ‘training’, with its connotations of automatic behaviour and its associations with ‘drills’ – military or otherwise – seems to sit particularly unhappily next to ‘autonomous learning’

In fact, it is now considered that the terms ‘learner training’ and ‘learner development’ can be used interchangeably (e.g., Ding, 2012) and both have been criticised for their association with strategy training (e.g., Benson, 1997; see section 2.4.1 for a counter argument).

Learner training starts from the learner in the context of the immediate classroom and involves both the teacher gradually transferring responsibility and control to students and equipping them with specific skills and strategies to enable them to take up greater responsibility and control. In this study, I shall argue that learner training is a combination of approaches and media to help learners develop the capacity and willingness necessary for greater autonomy. These include classroom-based learning-to-learn activities, learning contracts and learning diary for self-study, and presentations on language skills for collaborative learning. I shall attempt to design a programme to implement this model of learner training in English language learning to promote learner autonomy among students at the University. This will be presented in Chapter 4.

2.8.3 Learning strategies in learner training

Inspired by research into the ‘good language learner’, which sought to identify their learning strategies, studies on how to increase learning efficiency by strategy

instruction has become a popular research agenda and resulted in a high number of publications (e.g., Wenden, 1987; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Wenden, 1991; Cohen, 1998; Chamot, 2008; Gao, 2010; Oxford, 2011). In the field of learner autonomy, learning strategies are of paramount importance (Oxford, 2008). Wenden (1991: 29) contends that without learning strategies, learning can hardly take place and autonomy may result in 'all talk, no action'. This position is also supported by Oxford (2001: 166), who asserts that "autonomy requires conscious control of one's own learning processes."

Similar to learner autonomy, the concept of learning strategies has been defined and classified on many occasions by a considerable number of researchers (e.g., Rubin, 1975; Wenden, 1987; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Cohen, 1998; Oxford, 2008). In this study, learning strategies can be defined as "goal-oriented actions or steps (e.g., plan, evaluate, analyse) that learners take, with some degree of consciousness, to enhance their learning" (Oxford, 2008: 41). Regarding the classification of learning strategies, the two most well-known and applied categorisations seem to be O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) tri-partite classification and Oxford's (1990) six-fold taxonomy. O'Malley and Chamot (1990: 44-5) classify learning strategies into three categories: metacognitive (*i.e.*, "higher order executive skills" which involve thinking about the learning process, such as planning, monitoring, and self-evaluation), cognitive (*i.e.*, specific strategies which "operate directly on incoming information, manipulating it in a way that enhance learning", such as rehearsal, repetition, summarising, using visuals), and social/affective (*i.e.*, strategies that involve "either interaction with another person or ideational control over affect", such as cooperation with peers, questioning for clarification, and using self-talk).

Oxford's (1990) taxonomy breaks these categories down into two main categories: direct and indirect learning strategies. Direct strategies refer to those that are used for "dealing with the new language ... working with the language itself in a variety of tasks and situations" while indirect strategies are for "general management of learning" (*op.cit.*: 15). The two main categories are, however, further divided to provide a more nuanced description of strategies. The direct strategies include memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies while the indirect strategies consist of metacognitive, affective and social strategies. Compared with O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) classification, the difference in Oxford's (1990) taxonomy is that it divides cognitive strategies into three groups: cognitive, memory and compensation and separates social and affective strategies. Although the separation of social and affective strategies seems sensible as the former can be said to be "interpersonal and interactive in nature" while the latter are "more likely to be intrapersonal and self-controlled" (Hsu, 2005: 49), I find the division of cognitive strategies into three sub groups unnecessarily complex, particularly when attempting to identify strategy use in practice, because they are all related to the "mental processing of the language" (Oxford, 2008: 52). Therefore, in this study language learning strategies can be classified into four categories, using Oxford's (*ibid.*) summarised version:

Metacognitive strategies for guiding the learning process itself, such as *planning* and *evaluating*;

Affective strategies for managing, volition and emotions, such as *developing positive motivation* and *dealing with negative emotions*;

Cognitive strategies for mental processing of the language and creating cognitive schema (frameworks), such as *analysing* and *synthesising*;

Socio-interactive strategies for aiding the learner within the specific sociocultural setting, such as *collaborating* and *noticing sociocultural factors*.

Learning strategies play an important role in the learner training programme proposed in this study. Based on the premise that they are a key component in promoting learner autonomy (Little, 1994), learning strategies was introduced in a fashion that allowed learners to explore the factors affecting their learning and experiment with strategies that worked for them (Ellis and Sinclair, 1989: 2; Cohen, 1998). The learner training programme in this study did not adopt direct strategy instruction but rather supported the students discovering the most suitable strategies for learning the aspects of the language that they selected and shared with the class in their presentations. In addition, learners were encouraged to apply metacognitive strategies to control their learning through the use of learning contracts and learning diaries. These processes will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 (see section 4.5).

2.8.4 Previous studies on learner training for autonomy

According to Benson (2011: 154-5) approaches to learner training for autonomy can be categorised into six types:

- Direct advice on language-learning strategies and techniques (e.g., Rubin and Thompson, 1982; Hurd and Murphy, 2005)
- Training based on ‘good language learner’ research and insights from cognitive psychology (e.g., Weaver and Cohen, 1997)
- Training in which learners are encouraged to experiment with strategies and discover which work well for them (e.g., Ellis and Sinclair, 1989; Brown, 2002).
- Synthetic approaches drawing on a range of theoretical sources and general principles for developing autonomous learning in classroom settings, usually

embedded in normal language classroom (e.g., Dickinson, 1992; Dam, 1995; Dam and Legenhausen, 1996; Little *et al.*, 2002; Legenhausen, 2003).

- Integrated approaches treating learner training as a by-product of language learning (e.g., Legutke and Thomas, 1991; Cohen, 1998)
- Self-directed approaches in which learners are encouraged to train themselves through reflection, self-directed learning activities (e.g., Esch, 1997; O'Rourke and Schwienhorst, 2003)

I suggest, however, that such a categorisation is not absolute and clear-cut because a learner training programme can have the characteristics of more than one type (e.g., Ellis and Sinclair, 1989; Hsu, 2005). This is also clear from accounts of published research into learner training programmes. Proponents of learner training for autonomy have conducted a considerable number of studies on the subject in different socio-cultural contexts. In this section, I shall review three studies on learner training for autonomy that focused on developing metacognitive knowledge for autonomous learning and were conducted in similar, Confucian heritage, contexts to my current study.

- Jing (2006) conducted a metacognition training project which aimed to enhance reflection and autonomy in EFL learning by improving students' metacognitive knowledge and familiarising them with basic metacognitive strategies (e.g., planning, monitoring, and evaluating). Metacognition training was integrated into a regular English reading course for second-year English major students at a Chinese university. According to Jing (2006: 101), the metacognition training project included “mini-lectures on reading processes, a process-oriented approach in teaching reading comprehension, explicit and incidental instruction in comprehension

monitoring, practice with think-alouds, and reflective diary-keeping". Students were provided with "simple guidelines (emphasising true reflection instead of good composition, and meaning instead of grammatical correctness)" to keep reading diaries which served as main learning tools and data collecting tools (*ibid.*).

Although the author sought to identify evidence of the students' metacognitive awareness and their comments on the effectiveness of the metacognitive training procedures, the content of the students' diaries did not meet his expectation. Seeing the mismatches between the goals and expectations on the part of the teacher and the students as the manifestation of learner resistance in the metacognitive training project, Jing (2006) turned his attention to exploring the reasons for this resistance. He suggested that the institutional pressures and societal expectations resulted in an examination culture and a pragmatic product-oriented approach in the EFL classroom in which learners see short-term goals for examinations as priorities in learning. However, some topics in the students' learning diaries could be considered as evidence of their metacognitive awareness, such as, the importance of vocabulary and reading speed, efforts to search for short-cuts in EFL learning, difficulties in memorizing new words and in improving reading speed. Thus, Jing's (2006) study is relevant to my study because it highlights the importance of the contextual conditions and students' needs that I needed to take into account for my learner training programme.

- Lo (2010) implemented a reflective portfolio project in an English reading module offered to English major students in a national university in Taiwan. In this project, portfolios were used to enhance students' application of metacognitive strategies. During the course of four months, Lo (2010) guided her students through a

process of implementing a reflective portfolio for autonomous learning in the reading class, letting them contribute their opinions to the development of learning objectives and assessment criteria. She also prepared the students by providing them with reading skills and showing them how to write a critical reflection in the portfolio. To help the students keep track of their progress and enhance the quality of their reflection, Lo (2010) gave comments on the first two portfolio entries and used class meetings to answer students' concerns.

Using a post-course self-evaluation questionnaire, Lo (2010: 89) concludes from the students' feedback that "the portfolios were somewhat useful in helping them to become autonomous". The portfolio project was found to help students become aware of autonomous learning, the learning process, available resources and enhance their use of some metacognitive strategies (*ibid.*). However, Lo (2010) suggests that students be trained with necessary skills for monitoring, time management and critical thinking in order to improve the effectiveness of the use of reflective portfolios in promoting autonomous learning. In addition, she also emphasises the importance of the teacher changing her roles between decision-maker in the earlier stage and facilitator in the later stage of the study. This transition is believed to allow students to become familiar with the concept of autonomous learning and practise needed skills as of developing the capacity for 'reactive autonomy' (Littlewood, 1996) and taking their own initiatives (Lo, 2010: 80). This observation has an important bearing on my study as it reiterates the necessity of a gradual approach in which the teacher can take the initiative then move to involving the students in learning decision-making processes to enable them to gradually take more control over their learning.

• L.C.T. Nguyen and Gu (2013) investigated the effects of strategy-based instruction on the promotion of learner autonomy by implementing an eight-week metacognition training package incorporated into the academic writing programme delivered to an experimental group of third year English major students at a Vietnamese university. The training package focused on the training of strategic learning by incorporating the training of strategies into the regular language curriculum using Chamot *et al.*'s (1999, cited in L.C.T. Nguyen and Gu, 2013) CALLA (Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach) model. This model has four features: awareness raising, presentation and modelling, providing multiple practice opportunities, and evaluating the effectiveness of strategies and transferring them to new tasks. The study used a general learner autonomy questionnaire and a questionnaire that targeted the planning, monitoring, and evaluating of a writing task to elicit the effect of strategy-based instruction on learner autonomy. The development in students' self-regulation was identified by their use of planning, monitoring and evaluating strategies for the writing task.

The study found that students in the experimental group improved their ability to plan, monitor and evaluate a writing task more than students in the control groups. The experimental students were also reported to outperform students in the control groups in writing improvements after the training (L.C.T. Nguyen and Gu, 2013). From these findings, the authors concluded that the strategy-based instruction enhanced self-regulation and writing performance. Although this claim is somewhat limited to evidence of self-regulation in writing and the validity and reliability of the writing tests are questionable, L.C.T. Nguyen and Gu's (2013: 24) study is relevant to my study not only in terms of their approach and context but also in their emphasis on

“the gradual transfer of responsibility from the teacher to the learners”, which they claimed to be an important factor in the success of their programme.

The three studies reviewed in this section have informed the learner training programme I adopted in this study in terms of consideration about contextual conditions and learners’ needs, explicit training in metacognitive and critical skills, and gradual transfer of responsibility. However, these studies could be criticised for being subject specific (*i.e.*, reading, writing) which could limit the application of metacognitive strategies (e.g., planning, monitoring, evaluating) to other autonomous learning situations. This criticism can be found in Benson’s (2011: 161) comments below:

Research evidence suggests that explicit instruction in strategy use can enhance learning performance. It does not, however, show that it is necessarily effective in enabling learners to develop the capacity for autonomous learning. The risk involved in explicit instruction is that learners will develop a set of learning management skills, without developing the corresponding abilities concerned with control over cognitive and content aspects of their learning that will allow them to apply these techniques flexibly and critically. Open-ended, reflective models appear to be more effective in fostering autonomy because they integrate these three dimensions of control and allow the learners to develop an awareness of the appropriateness of strategies to the overall self-direction of their learning.

An ‘open-ended, reflective model’ which focuses on developing learners’ metacognitive knowledge and providing multiple practice opportunities with learning strategies (Chamot, 2008) will be discussed in Chapter 4, in which I shall present my model for learner training for autonomous learning.

2.9 Assessing learner autonomy in language learning

2.9.1 The need to assess learner autonomy and its difficulties

Despite the proliferation of the literature on aspects of learner autonomy, there has only been a modest amount of published research on assessing learner autonomy (Benson, 2007; 2010). This state of the play is in contrast to the growing need for evidence to demonstrate the improvement in learners' autonomy for it has been widely accepted that learner autonomy helps learners become more independent and, more importantly, more proficient in language learning (Sinclair, 1999a). After all, a systematic way to measure learner autonomy is needed because increased learner autonomy can be claimed to be the result of a learner training programme (Hsu, 2005), a benefit of self-accessed learning (Reinders and Lázaro, 2008), or a basis to award credits in a certificate-awarding programme (Ravindran, 2001). In these cases, it is necessary to measure the extent to which learners are autonomous in their learning to validate the effectiveness of the promotion of learner autonomy and ensure that it is not just 'simply an act of faith' (Sinclair, 1999a: 96).

Measuring learner autonomy, unfortunately, is not a simple task for it is a multidimensional construct (c.f. 2.2.1). O'Leary (2007) put together three main issues raised in the literature on assessing learner autonomy. Firstly, autonomy is not an 'all-or-nothing concept' but a matter of degrees (Nunan, 1997, see section 2.5) and although this observation has been widely cited in the literature, our ability to measure degrees of autonomy is limited because "we know little about the stages that learners go through in developing their autonomy in different contexts of learning other than that the process is highly uneven and variable" (Benson, 2001: 53). Moreover, from a sociocultural viewpoint, Benson and Cooker (2013: 7) contend that "[a]utonomy is constituted by a variety of abilities and dispositions and is liable to

vary from person to person and, within the same person, from context to context and from time to time”.

The second issue arises in the difficulties faced by researchers and practitioners when trying to determine what learner autonomy constitutes in terms of learners’ behaviours. Sinclair’s (1999a: 106-7) comment highlights the complexity of a behavioural description of learner autonomy, claiming that it “is not an easily-described single behaviour” and “there are so many variables that affect learner’s degree at one time that it is clearly impossible to evaluate autonomy based on observable behaviour”. This observation is reiterated by Benson (2001: 51), who posits that “[a]lthough we may be able to identify and list behaviours that demonstrate control over learning we have little evidence to suggest that autonomy consists of any particular combination of these behaviours”.

The third issue was originally raised by Breen and Mann (1997), who warned against the ‘mask of autonomous behaviour’. According to these authors, “[l]earners will generally seek to please me as the teacher. If I ask them to manifest behaviours that they think I perceive as the exercise of autonomy, they will gradually discover what these behaviours are and will subsequently reveal them back to me. Put simply, learners will give up their autonomy to put on the mask of autonomous behaviour” (Breen and Mann, 1997: 141). Discussing this phenomenon, Benson (2011) argues that this problem relates to the distinction between autonomous behaviour and autonomy as a capacity. A behaviour which seems to be teacher-dependent can be the result of an active decision-making process on the part of the learner after considering all the options available to him (c.f. Sinclair, 1999a) while other ‘self-initiated’ behaviours are just ‘generated in response to a task in which the observed behaviours

are either explicitly or implicitly required' (Benson, 2001: 52). Therefore, Benson (2001: 68) asserts that "[i]f we are to measure learner autonomy reliably, we will somehow have to capture both the meaning of behaviours and their authenticity in relation to an underlying capacity for autonomy".

The issue of capturing capacity for learner autonomy will be revisited later on in this chapter when I discuss assessment of learner's level of autonomy (see section 2.9.3). In the next section, I shall explore an influential thread in the literature on measuring learner autonomy, namely, measuring readiness for autonomy.

2.9.2 Readiness for learner autonomy

2.9.2.1 *What is readiness for autonomy?*

In his classic book on learner autonomy Holec (1981: 22) suggests a "deconditioning process" be needed to prepare learners for autonomy. This process of psychological preparation is intended to move learners away from assumptions and prejudices about their role and language learning. These include, for example, the notion that there is only one ideal method which can only be obtained from the teacher or the idea that learning experience and skills from other subjects cannot be transferred into language learning (*ibid*). This lends itself to a view that learners may possess attitudes and beliefs that are considered un-conducive to autonomous learning. In other words, these learners are not 'ready' because these attitudes and beliefs may well affect their willingness to set out to learn autonomously.

Readiness for autonomy, however, does not seem to consist of only attitudes and beliefs. As I have discussed in section 2.3.1, "a high degree of metacognitive awareness, i.e., knowledge about learning" (Sinclair, 2000b: 7) can be considered to be a precondition for the "potential capacity to act in a given situation", i.e.,

autonomy (Holec, 1981: 3). This knowledge about learning encompasses knowledge about the learner him/herself, knowledge about what is being learned, knowledge about the learning context, and knowledge about the learning processes (Sinclair, 2000a). Therefore, a certain level of awareness of learning can be said to be fundamental to readiness for learner autonomy.

In addition to knowledge, motivation is also a requirement. In summary, if we take Littlewood's (1996) framework of autonomy, which centres on motivation, willingness, knowledge and skills, as the starting point, readiness for learner autonomy can be defined in two perspectives: psychological and metacognitive. In terms of psychology, readiness for autonomy is learners' positive attitudes and beliefs that enhance their willingness to learn autonomously. In terms of metacognition, readiness can be seen as the sufficient knowledge of and skills in the process of learning which enable learners to actually perform autonomous learning. This distinction, however, is not clear-cut as learners may possess some misconceptions about the learning processes which form attitudes and beliefs considered to be unfavourable to autonomous learning.

2.9.2.2 Measuring readiness for autonomy

Several researchers and proponents have argued for the central role of measuring readiness in promoting learner autonomy (e.g., Cotterall, 1995; Chan, 2001; Breeze, 2002; Spratt *et al.*, 2002; Thang and Alias, 2007; Yildirim, 2008). From the psychological perspective on readiness for autonomy discussed above, Cotterall (1995: 196) posits that learners' behaviour is governed by beliefs and experience and therefore 'the beliefs learners hold may either contribute to or impede the development of their potential for autonomy'. Similarly, subsequent studies by Chan

(2000), Breeze (2002), Spratt *et al.*(2002), Thang and Alias (2007) and Yildirim (2008) seek to explore learners' readiness and capacity for autonomy in their socio-cultural and educational contexts and conclude that this is necessary before any plans to promote learner autonomy are implemented.

The studies, though varied in terms of their sizes and methodological approaches, shed light on the complexity of readiness for autonomy. This complexity is reflected through the factors obtained and investigated in those studies, such as (1) Role of the teacher, (2) Role of feedback, (3) Learner independence, (4) Learner confidence in study ability, (5) Experience of language learning, and (6) Approach to studying (Cotterall, 1995). This list has been further developed by other researchers. For example, to gain insights into learners' cognitive and metacognitive awareness of the learning process, Chan (2001) investigated learners' aims and motivation, their learning preferences, their perceptions of and disposition towards learner autonomy. Thang and Alias' (2007) study, while looking into students' inclination towards teacher-centredness or learner autonomy, also took into account the exploration of their level of computer literacy as this was believed to be related to the capacity to use technology in autonomous learning.

As these studies vary in terms of purposes, research methodology, socio-cultural contexts, their findings also reflect the variation of the levels of autonomy of students from different cultures. In the Asian context, conflicting results were found. The Hong Kong students in Chan's (2001: 514) study were considered to be "reasonably autonomous in several ways", which leads to the researcher's suggestion that they are "at the early stage" of autonomous learning. These findings surprised her though,

given her presumption of the Hong Kong student's stereotype and socio-cultural background.

In contrast to the Hong Kong students in Chan's (2001) study, Thang and Alias (2007) found that the majority of Malaysian students in their study are teacher-centred. Only a small group of students were found to be autonomous learners. However, comparing this result with those of other studies of Hong Kong students in terms of socio-cultural, educational and historical background, the researchers posited that teacher-centredness "does not necessarily mean a lack of ability to learn autonomously" (Thang and Alias, 2007: 15). Therefore, it was suggested that the cultural context needs to be taken into consideration when assessing learners' readiness for or level of autonomy.

Similar to studies on Asian students, those on European students carried out in Spain and Turkey yielded contradictory results. Although the students in Breeze's (2002) and Yildirim's (2008) studies were reported to have some sense of responsibility for their own learning, the Spanish students in Breeze's were more teacher-dependent. As a result, it was found necessary to provide scaffolding for learners in the traditional teacher-led class to enable them to make decisions on their own before more responsibility can be transferred. Yildirim's (2008) study on Turkish students provided even more encouraging results. The students were ready to take more responsibility as they were observed to be already practicing some kind of autonomous behaviour.

Divergent as their findings are, the studies reviewed in this paper have raised some important points concerning how to promote autonomous learning at tertiary level. First, it is important to explore learners' beliefs in the learning process, especially

their perception of learner's and teacher's roles (i.e., responsibility). Constructing a shared understanding of these factors will provide "an essential foundation of learner autonomy" (Cotterall, 1995: 203). From this starting point, promoting autonomy in learning will require motivating and involving students, providing them scaffolding for more responsibility, and building their capacity to learn independently.

2.9.3 Assessing learners' level of learner autonomy

2.9.3.1 *Approaches to assessing learner autonomy*

A detailed survey of the literature on learner autonomy reveals that there have been attempts to assess learner autonomy indirectly through its relationship with observable and measurable factors. According to Sinclair (1999a), this can be done by measuring learners' proficiency gains (Green and Oxford, 1995), seeking evidence in terms of learners' motivation and perceived strategy use in their feedback (Nunan, 1997), monitoring learners' behaviour by logging their self-accessed learning activities, and assessing the effect of strategy training in terms of effectiveness and frequency of strategy use (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990). However, these approaches by all means suffer from various shortcomings. First of all, it is difficult to eliminate other variables to make a clear-cut correlation between learner autonomy and a chosen measurable factor. Secondly, approaches such as learners' self-report sometimes can only yield minimal responses and are constrained by learners' linguistic proficiency (Sinclair, 1999a).

As assessing learner autonomy through its relationship with other factors proves to be problematic, there have been attempts to break down the concept of learner autonomy in measurable constructs to pave the way for direct assessing approaches (e.g., Sinclair, 1999b; Champagne *et al.*, 2001; Lai, 2001). Benson (2010: 79) argues that in

foreign language learning, the sense of autonomy that researchers and practitioners have in mind is one that refers to “a certain kind of relationship between the student and the learning concept”. Therefore, he suggests using the term ‘control’ to describe this relationship because “it has wide resonances in the educational literature” (*ibid.*). He then puts forward a possible framework for measuring a student’s autonomy which consists of three ‘poles of attraction in regard to control over learning’, namely ‘student control’, ‘other control’, and ‘no control’. This framework can be used to measure the degree of control, shared between the student and others, of dimensions of the learning process. Although Benson claims that this framework seems to be supported by five previous studies which he reviewed in his work (2010), I find my view of measuring learner autonomy more aligned with Sinclair’s (1999a) approach to assessing learner autonomy as a capacity by evaluating metacognitive awareness due to my focus on the students’ capacity and willingness to take responsibility (see 2.9).

2.9.3.2 Assessing learner autonomy as a capacity

Sinclair (1999a: 100) highlights the understandings of autonomy in language learning as a “capacity or ability to make informed decisions about one’s learning, rather than actual behaviour or freedom to constraint”. This position is in line with Holec’s (1981: 5) view that autonomy is a term “describing a potential capacity to act in a given situation – in our case – learning, and not the actual behaviour of an individual in that situation”. In this vein, the evaluation of autonomy can be seen as a process of monitoring this capacity to find evidence of learners’ degrees of autonomy. Sinclair (1999a: 101) summarises this approach as follows,

[t]he principle challenge is to evaluate the ‘capacity’ for making informed decisions about language learning. In other words, it is necessary to monitor learners’

metacognitive awareness, an area which has mostly been neglected by the teaching profession and educational researchers.

According to Sinclair (1999a), the concept of metacognitive awareness stems from the term ‘metacognition’, which was first used by Flavell (1970) and refers to learners’ awareness of the learning processes. She argues that there is a clear link between the development of metacognitive awareness and learner autonomy as the former reflects learners’ capacity to make informed decisions about their learning, which is essentially what the latter means. Therefore, evaluating the development of metacognition is central to the assessment of learner autonomy (Sinclair, 1999a).

Initially, Sinclair identifies three important areas in learners’ metacognitive awareness (1999a: 102):

- The learner him/herself as a learner
- The subject matter, i.e., the English language
- The process of learning

In order to assess learners’ levels of awareness in these areas, she suggests using the following questions as useful criteria.

Can students:

- provide a rationale for their choice of learning activities and materials?
- describe the strategies they used?
- provide an evaluation of the strategies used?
- identify their strengths and weaknesses?
- describe their plans for learning?
- describe alternative strategies that they could have used? (Sinclair, 1999a: 103)

Learners’ responses to questions deriving from these criteria can be evaluated to classify their metacognitive awareness into three levels: (1) largely unaware, (2)

becoming aware, and (3) largely aware (*ibid.*). Subsequently, a fourth area - the learning context - was added to this list (Sinclair, 2000a, see Figure 2.1). In this study, I shall argue that this approach is suitable for my need to examine students' development in autonomy through the intervention programme. This approach provides me with a useful framework to analyse qualitative data I collected through student focus groups and interviews.

Lai's (2001) rating scales for the objective measurement of learner autonomy can be considered to be compatible with Sinclair's (1999a) approach as they provide excellent tools for investigation of metacognition. With the view to "facilitate objective measurement of how learners' capacity for autonomy in language learning has developed over a course term", Lai (2001: 35) designs two rating scales to measure learner autonomy at macro and micro level of the learning process in a listening class. The first scale investigates learners' ability to make informed decisions at task level in terms of self-monitoring and self-evaluating. In order to do so, Lai evaluated two components of task, namely task aims and self-assessment, using following criteria.

- whether the task aim(s) is/are relevant to the type of programme chosen, e.g., to set an aim of 'entertainment' or 'getting used to informal conversation exchanges' for watching a 'comedy' is more relevant than for watching a 'news report';
- whether the aim(s) is/are conducive to training aspects of listening skills/strategies.
- whether the self-assessment conducted is related to the set aim(s);
- whether the self-assessment conducted is related to the learner's listening process and/or performance. (Lai, 2001: 36-7)

According to Lai (2001: 39), the second scale, which was used to assess learner-designed course of study, seeks to evaluate learner's self-direction, i.e., their "ability to take charge of, self-organise or manage their own learning process" (Dickinson, 1987; Holec, 1996). By looking into learners' personal course design, Lai expects to elicit their metacognitive awareness of aspects of self-directed language learning and their actual ability in planning for such mode of learning (*ibid.*). These aspects include goal setting, materials and learning activity, and self-assessment. These aspects are evaluated using seventeen statements on a seven-point rating scale.

It is apparent from the review of Lai's work above that his rating scales can be used in line with Sinclair's (1999a) approach. Therefore, in this study, I intend to utilise both the scales introduced by Lai (2001) and the criteria suggested by Sinclair (1999a) to investigate the results of the intervention programme by assessing the students' gain in developing learning autonomy. In the next section, I shall discuss further my view of learner autonomy and how it is shaped by my cultural view of learner autonomy and influenced by the metacognition framework suggested by Sinclair (2000a).

2.10 My view of learner autonomy

Having reviewed the theoretical and philosophical aspects of learner autonomy in the literature of language teaching and learning, I shall now discuss my view of learner autonomy from the Vietnamese perspective. Vietnam has much in common with other East Asian countries. Strongly influenced by Confucianism as a result of a long period of Chinese domination in the past, the Vietnamese society is a highly collectivist one. From this tradition, Vietnamese people value academic success and

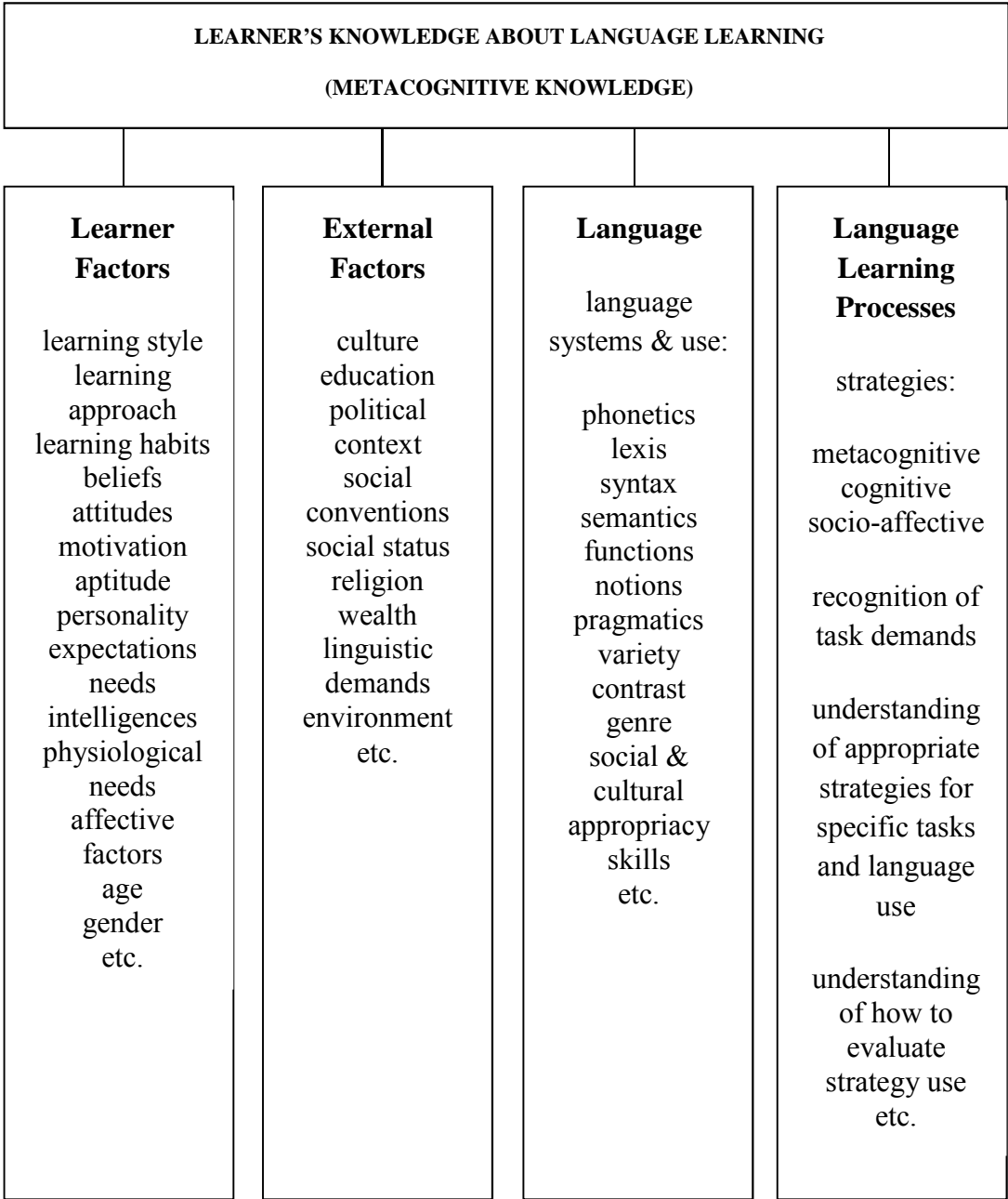
believe it stems from hard-work. This sheds light on my view of learner autonomy in Vietnam.

From my viewpoint, autonomy in learning is taking responsibility. The notion of responsibility means that learners should be aware of their role as the main agent in learning if they are to achieve success. This awareness of responsibility in learning is considered essential and central to the Asian philosophy of learning, which emphasises internalised mental endeavour rather than overt behavioural activities (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996, Usuki, 2007). In line with this, context, whether in the form of the wider sociocultural and political conditions or the narrower institutional environment in which learners find themselves, is secondary to personal determination. This echoes Hsu's (2005) emphasis on the role of will-power and determination in learner autonomy in Taiwan.

In order to take responsibility for learning, learners will need the capacity and willingness to do so. Learners need the skills and knowledge necessary to manage and perform learning effectively. These skills and knowledge could be subsumed under four areas of metacognitive knowledge: self, learning context, subject matter, processes of learning. In language learning, these are the knowledge of oneself as a learner (i.e., learning styles, attitudes and beliefs, motivation), understanding of the learning context (i.e., educational requirements, available resources, the socio-political and cultural contexts), language awareness (i.e., knowledge of the language system and use), and language learning processes (i.e., language learning strategies) (Sinclair, 2000a: 46; see Figure 2.1). In the same vein, metacognitive knowledge forms the core of Rubin's (2001: 25) notion of Learner Self-Management, which is defined as the "ability to deploy procedures (i.e., planning, monitoring, evaluating,

problem-solving and implementing) and to access knowledge (self-knowledge, strategic knowledge and prior knowledge, contextual knowledge) and beliefs in order to accomplish learning goals”.

Figure 2.1: Metacognitive knowledge for autonomy in language



Source: Sinclair (2000a: 46)

It is believed that developing in the learner a deeper awareness of these areas of

metacognitive knowledge is crucial in building learners' capacity to make informed decisions about learning (Sinclair, 2000a). This can be done through intervention (i.e., 'learner training') where learners' previous skills and knowledge can be further developed together with positive attitudes towards taking more responsibility for learning. However, before learners become willing and able to learn autonomously and take full responsibility, stages such as reactive and proactive autonomy maybe relevant (Littlewood, 1999) as I think in the Vietnamese context, learners will need to experience other-initiated direction before they are able to create one for themselves.

The conceptualisation of fostering learner autonomy as developing learners' metacognitive knowledge to take responsibility for learning establishes a theoretical framework for this study. It governs the development of the learner training programme in Vietnamese tertiary EFL education, sets guidelines for the design of research instruments and provides conceptual foundations for the analysis and discussion of data.

2.11 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a systematic review of the literature on learner autonomy and introduced the theoretical framework on which I developed my conceptualisation of learner autonomy. In essence, the chapter discussed major perspectives of learner autonomy in terms of its definitions, versions and levels. Cultural issues in and pedagogy for promoting learner autonomy, learner training and assessing learner autonomy were also examined in this chapter. The discussion of these major themes in literature allowed me to conceptualise the field and developed my own view of learner autonomy in English language learning. Before using this conceptualisation as the theoretical foundation for the training programme in Chapter 4, I shall present my

philosophical and methodological stance on investigating learner autonomy in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to establish a philosophical and methodological foundation for my research study. It begins by an introduction of the research questions, followed by a discussion of the relationship between research and knowledge. Then my research position adopted in this study will be introduced following a review of current competing research paradigms and traditions. The rest of this chapter is devoted to presenting the design of this research study, including its scope and limitations, participants, ethical considerations, data collection instruments, and the research procedures. The chapter concludes with a summary of collected data.

3.2 Research questions

In this case study, I explored the possibilities of fostering learner autonomy among Vietnamese university students through pedagogical intervention to develop their capacity to take charge of their own learning. In order to do this, I identified five main research questions that I needed to answer. Questions 1-3 investigate the *status quo* of learner autonomy in the research context to set the scene for the intervention programme. Question 4 examines the effects of intervention on learner development, while Question 5 investigates the influence of the socio-cultural context on the promotion of learner autonomy. These questions and their sub-questions are listed below:

Q1. How ready are students of the University for autonomous learning?

- Q1a: What are the students' learning preferences with regard to learner autonomy?
- Q1b: What are the students' perceptions of their ability and confidence in learning?

Q2. How motivated are the University's students to learn English?

- Q2a: What kind of motivation do the students have?
- Q2b: What is the role of autonomy and self-efficacy in motivating the students?

Q3. How is learner autonomy perceived and practised by teachers and students in the context of tertiary education in Vietnam?

- Q3a: What roles do students perceive that they play as learners (in relation with the teacher)?
- Q3b. What roles do teachers perceive that they play in relation with the students?
- Q3c. What autonomous learning strategies do students use in English language learning?
- Q3d. What do English language teachers do to promote autonomous learning?
- Q3e. What difficulties do teachers and students perceive of when promoting autonomous learning?

Q4. What are the perceived effects of the learner training programme on the intervention students?

- Q4a. What are the perceived effects of the programme on the intervention students' motivation and use of strategies, especially metacognitive and cognitive strategies?
- Q4b. What are the perceived effects of the programme on the intervention students' beliefs, attitudes and performance?

Q5. To what extent is culture perceived to play a role in the development and manifestations of learner autonomy in Vietnam?

3.3 Research and knowledge

Mouly (1978, cited in Cohen *et al.*, 2007) contends that experience, reasoning and research are three broad categories of means to discover truths about the world. Experience is the most commonly used strategy to tackle day-to-day problems. It is reflected through the common-sense knowing people use to make sense of what is

happening around them and make decisions for subsequent actions. However, this approach to problem-solving is haphazard and uncritical (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Therefore, the use of reasoning can be seen as a way to compensate for the shortcomings of experience. With deductive and inductive reasoning and a combined form of these two, people are able to draw logical conclusions (i.e., deductively from *a priori* propositions or inductively from data of individual cases) in their attempt to comprehend the world (*ibid.*).

While the three categories mentioned above must be seen as complementary and overlapping, research can be considered the higher level means by which people set out to understand the nature of surrounding phenomena in order to take control of the environment. Citing Borg (1963), Cohen *et al.* (2007: 7) comment that research is “a combination of both experience and reasoning” and “the most successful approach to the discovery of truth”. According to the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (2010: 31), research can be defined as:

... an intellectually controlled investigation which leads to advances in knowledge through the discovery and codification of new information or the development of further understanding about existing information and practice. It is a creative, cumulative and independent activity conducted by people with knowledge of the theories, methods and information of the principal field of inquiry and its cognate area(s).

This definition affirms the ultimate goal of research as a contribution to advances in knowledge. Being an ‘intellectually controlled investigation’, research involves a systematic and critical approach to enquiry. As such, unlike experience or reasoning, research can only be conducted effectively by people equipped with a knowledge of the theories and methods of inquiry (*ibid.*).

3.4 Paradigms and research traditions

Theories and methods of inquiry have always been guided by certain sets of basic beliefs about the nature of reality, the relationship between reality and knowledge, and the way to take hold of what can be known (Reese, 1980). These beliefs can also be referred to as ‘metaphysical truth’. Lincoln and Guba (1985: 14) argue that this truth “cannot be tested for truthfulness against some external norms, such as correspondence with nature, logical deductibility, or professional standards of conducts”, but must be accepted at face value. They define this systematic set of basic beliefs and its accompanying methods as a *paradigm*, a concept used earlier by Kuhn (1962) in his account of conceptual change in the physical sciences (Donmoyer, 2006). To unpack the connotations of this term, it is useful to examine Patton’s definition (1978: 203, cited in Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 15):

A paradigm is a world view, a general perspective, a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world. As such, paradigms are deeply embedded in the socialization of adherents and practitioners: paradigms tell them what is important, legitimate, and reasonable. Paradigms are also normative, telling the practitioner what to do without the necessity of long existential or epistemological consideration. But it is this aspect of paradigms that constitutes both their strength and weakness – their strength in that it makes action possible, their weakness in that the very reason for action is hidden in the unquestioned assumptions of the paradigm.

As a basic set of beliefs that guide action, a paradigm is based on three types of assumption: ontological, epistemological and methodological (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Guba and Lincoln (1994) argue that the order of these assumptions reflects a logical primacy. According to them, the ontological question is concerned with the form and nature of reality. It reflects how people view the ‘world’ and determines what there is to be known about it. The epistemological consideration looks into the nature of the relationship between the knower and what can be known. The third type

of assumption – methodological – is believed to be constrained by the first two assumptions. In essence, one’s view about the world and about the relationship between it and what is to be known will determine the way one sets out to find out about it. Taken together, answers to these philosophical questions form paradigms that configure any enquiry about the world.

The appropriation of Kuhn’s (1962) concept of paradigm in the educational research field has led to paradigm proliferation and paradigm wars (Donmoyer, 2006). Lincoln and Guba (1985) initially contrasted two main paradigms, which they refer to as the traditional positivistic and the emerging naturalistic (constructivist) paradigms. They later expanded this list to four alternative paradigms, namely positivism, post-positivism, critical theory *et al.* [*sic.*] and constructivism (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, see APPENDIX A). They add that critical theory is “a blanket term denoting a set of several alternative paradigms, including additionally (but not limited to) neo-Marxism, feminism, materialism, and participatory enquiry” (*op. cit.*: 109). This rapid increase in the number of paradigms in educational research has been characterized as ‘paradigm proliferation’ (Donmoyer, 2006: 11).

There are two fundamental beliefs underlining the paradigmatic view of enquiry. Firstly, it strongly asserts that positivistic and naturalistic paradigms are incommensurable. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), one could not be both a positivist and a naturalist/constructivist. This dichotomy could also be roughly translated into the popular quantitative/qualitative dualisms in terms of research strategies. Secondly, central to the paradigmatic view is the notion of paradigm shifts where one way of thinking about knowledge and research is replaced by another. This process involves

... a reconstruction of the field from new fundamentals, a reconstruction that changes some of the field's most elementary theoretical generalizations as well as many of its paradigm methods and applications ... When the transition is complete, the profession will have changed its view of the field, its methods, and its goals. (Kuhn, 1962: 84-85)

Recent developments in the field of educational research have witnessed the increasing popularity of naturalistic paradigms and their accompanying qualitative methodologies (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, Eisner, 1997, Erickson and Gutierrez, 2002, Lincoln and Guba, 2000). In fact, it has been suggested that there is a tendency towards convergence among research paradigms. In other words, according to Hsu (2005: 106), "the scientific (objective) paradigm is moving towards the subjective end of the subjective-objective epistemological continuum".

3.5 My research position

For my research into fostering learner autonomy in tertiary education in Vietnam, I take on a 'constructivist-interpretive' stance (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). This term is used to contrast with the positivist paradigm which sees reality as objective and apprehendable and asserts that "knowledge acquisition is value-neutral and stripped of moral content" (Wicks and Freeman, 1998: 129). The use of this double-barrelled term, however, is often avoided by Denzin and Lincoln in their editions of *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (1994, 2003, 2005, 2011) because they argue that "[a]ll research is interpretive; it is guided by the researcher's set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 22). Therefore, they tend to use the term 'constructivist' solely in their classification of competing interpretive research paradigms. According to them,

The constructivist paradigm assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and respondent cocreate understandings), and a

naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 24).

Other researchers contend that the two constituents of the term ‘constructivist-interpretive’ are often used interchangeably. Schwandt (1994) claims that constructivism is synonymous with interpretivism. He argues that they are sensitising concepts that lead to a particular research outlook:

Proponents of these persuasions share the goal of understanding the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it. This goal is variously spoken of as an abiding concern for the life world, for the emic point of view, for understanding meaning, for grasping the actor’s definition of a situation, for *Verstehen*. The world of lived reality and situation-specific meanings that constitute the general object of investigation is thought to be constructed by social actors (*op. cit.*: 118).

The concept of ‘*Verstehen*’, meaning “understanding something in its context” (Holloway, 1997: 2), is characteristic of Max Weber’s (1864-1920) interpretivist approach. This emphasis on the research context is compatible with the naturalistic approach advocated by the constructivist paradigm in Denzin and Lincoln’s (2005) definition above.

Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2006: xviii) argue that interpretive methods that have

“their intentional, conscious grounding in or their less explicit but nonetheless recognisable family resemblance to the ontological and epistemological presuppositions of the Continental interpretive philosophies of phenomenology and hermeneutics (and some critical theory) and their American counterparts of symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology, and pragmatism, among others”

share “a constructivist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology”. She asserts that these interpretive methods “could as well, then, more fully be called constructivist-interpretive methods” (*ibid.*). However, she contends that this cumbersome double

term is “more commonly referred to as “interpretive” methods, although one also finds reference to “constructivist” or “constructionist” methods” (*ibid.*)

Ontologically, I embrace the constructivist/relativist worldview that “realities exist in the form of multiple mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific, dependent for their form and content on the persons who hold them” (Guba, 1990: 27). Epistemologically, I believe in the interpretivist/subjectivist view of inquiry, whereby “enquirer and inquired into are fused into a single (monistic) entity” (*ibid.*). Findings are literally the creation of the process of interaction between the two. In the field of autonomy, the paradigm shift in research can be aligned with the development of versions of learner autonomy as discussed in section 2.4. From the discussion of the correspondence between positivist, constructivist and critical views and the technical, psychological, sociocultural, and political-critical versions of learner autonomy, it could be suggested that research in the field of autonomy is amenable to a wide range of approaches. Nevertheless, I find that a naturalistic approach is best suited to researching learner autonomy for two reasons. First, this paradigm allows me to explore the individual psychological and cognitive development of learners in terms of attitude and learning ability. Second, it also allows me to look into the social interaction between learners and others, such as teachers, peers, and parents, in this process.

Having committed myself to constructivist ontology, interpretivist epistemology and the use of a naturalistic approach, I find it important to contend that these commitments do not necessarily prevent me from considering using mixed methods to my research. This position is advocated by Bryman (2008: 588), who posits that “while epistemological and ontological commitments may be associated with certain

research methods ... the connections are not deterministic”. He suggests that these connections should be thought of as tendencies rather than as definitive connections. Moreover, multiple perspectives are also advocated by Donmoyer (2006: 23) as “each perspective might be useful to accomplish different purposes, and, at the very least, multiple perspectives can make us aware of different options available to us”. The use of ‘mixed’ approaches has also been advocated by Riley (1996), who believes that the dialectical opposition between the ‘positivist’ and ‘anti-positivist’ is unhelpful. He therefore suggests using mixed methods approaches to research learner autonomy, such as ethnographic, psychological, ethno-methodological approaches, which he believes are useful for “the investigation of social objects which are appropriate to their nature as part of intersubjective reality, but which at the same time respect the principles for a scientific methodology” (Riley 1996: 259). I shall provide more justifications for this position in the next section.

3.6 Research design: case study using mixed methods

3.6.1 Case study

Case study research is defined as “[a]n empirical inquiry about a contemporary phenomenon (e.g., a “case”), set within its real-world context – especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2009: 18). This type of enquiry is pertinent when a researcher wants to answer either a descriptive question, such as, “What is happening or has happened?”, or an explanatory question, such as, “How or why did something happen?” (Yin, 2012: 5). As this study aims to investigate the perceptions and practices of promoting learner autonomy in language learning at a private university, using case study research is an appropriate approach (see section 3.2 for the research questions). Moreover, the case study method is also in line with my interpretivist/subjectivist epistemology as it

emphasises the study of a phenomenon within its real-world context and favours the collection of data in natural settings (*ibid.*). In this vein, the case study approach is used to build up a rich picture of learner autonomy in the research context of this study by “using different kinds of data collection and gathering the views, perceptions, experiences and/or ideas of diverse individuals relating to the case” (Hamilton, 2011: 1). In particular, this study employs a wide array of data collecting methods, including survey, interviews, focus groups, learning contracts and learning diaries, in order to explore how learner autonomy is perceived and practiced in tertiary language learning from the perspective of the teachers and students at a private university in Vietnam. The use of these multiple methods is the focus of the next section.

3.6.2 Mixed methods

The employment of multiple data collecting methods mentioned in the previous section fits the definition of mixed methods research, which is defined as:

... the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration (Johnson *et al.*, 2007: 123).

According to Johnson *et al.* (2007: 118), mixed methods research has been referred to under various names, such as ‘blended research’, ‘integrative research’, ‘multi-method research’, ‘multiple methods’, ‘triangulated studies’, ‘ethnographic residual analysis’, and ‘mixed research’, by proponents of this ‘third major research approach’. Mixed methods research has proceeded through several stages of development since the 1950s. In its early days, much effort was made by its

proponents to respond to the qualitative researchers' insistence on epistemological and ontological incompatibility between qualitative and quantitative research. Since the late 1980s mixed methods research proponents have been focusing on designs of mixed methods studies. At present, mixed methods have been recognised as a distinctive approach in the field of educational research (Creswell and Clark, 2011).

With the emergence of mixed methods research, it has been suggested that paradigm talk should no longer be considered to be appropriate in the new era of educational research, although the paradigmatic view of educational research discussed in previous sections is useful in revealing the philosophical connections between ontological and epistemological positions and research methodologies. Donmoyer (2006: 24) asserts that "we are virtually all constructivists now ... so, in essence, at the epistemological level, the paradigm wars have been won by those who embraced naturalist/constructivist/interpretivist thinking". He then argues that this nearly universal embrace of a constructivist conception of knowledge in the field of educational research by the end of the twentieth century could pave the way for the consideration of abandoning the use of paradigmatic terms to characterise differences among educational researchers (*ibid.*).

Schwandt (2000: 210) also declares the following:

All research is interpretive, and we face a multiplicity of methods that are suitable for different kinds of understandings. So the traditional means of coming to grips with one's identity as a researcher by aligning oneself with a particular set of methods (or being defined in one's department as a student of "qualitative" or "quantitative" methods) is no longer very useful. If we are to go forward, we need to get rid of that distinction. (p. 210)

In light of these arguments, I choose to adopt a ‘technical perspective’ on educational research (Bryman, 2008). This approach recognises that quantitative and qualitative research are each connected with distinctive epistemological and ontological assumptions, as discussed in previous sections. However, it does not see these connections as fixed and ineluctable. Instead, it is argued that one method from one strategy can be “pressed into the service of another”. Therefore, these two research strategies are seen as compatible (*op. cit.*: 606). This claim is also in line with Creswell and Clark’s (2007: 5) assertion that “the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone.” Bryman (2008) gives a list 16 rationales for combining qualitative and quantitative research. Following are two rationales that I find particularly relevant to my present study.

- Triangulation: this rationale refers to the ability to use qualitative and quantitative strategies to triangulate findings so as to achieve greater validity. I believe that using data generated by both methods will allow my analysis to arrive at more rigorous findings.
- Completeness: the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods will also facilitate a more comprehensive account of my area of inquiry. In other words, quantitative data will enable me to spot general trends in terms of students’ learning preferences, perception of responsibility and learning strategies and to compare students’ and teachers’ views on a wide range of issues. Qualitative data will provide insights into the reasons underlying findings generated by quantitative methods.

The employment of mixed methods research is also found to be pertinent to the case study research design used in this study because the use of multiple sources and multiple methods is “characteristic of high quality case study and lends weight to the validity of the findings” (Hamilton, 2011: 2). Moreover, mixed methods research also provides balance, breadth and depth to the answers to the research questions. The use of quantitative data allowed me to provide answers to research questions in the form of general trends. These trends were compared and contrasted with qualitative findings which offer explanations, illustration, and elaboration for quantitative findings. Take, for example, research question 1a: ‘What are the students’ learning preferences with regard to learner autonomy?’ Quantitative data collected by a questionnaire provided statistics about how strongly the students agreed with statements about taking more responsibility in learning (see section 5.4.3). Qualitative data from focus groups were used to provide more information about the students’ understanding of taking responsibility and why they preferred some responsibilities to others (see section 6.2.4.6). Quantitative and qualitative data were linked to answer all the research questions of this study in Chapter 8 (see also APPENDIX B for a match between instruments and research questions).

In conclusion, this study qualifies as mixed methods research because it has the following characteristics which are suggested by (Creswell and Clark, 2011).

- It collects and analyses rigorously both qualitative and quantitative data based on research questions (see chapter 5, 6, 7, and 8).

- It links the two forms of data by using quantitative data to elicit qualitative data (see section 3.10.3.2).

- It frames these procedures within philosophical worldviews and theoretical lens, as discussed in this and previous sections.

3.7 Scope and limitations of this study

This study sought to investigate how learner autonomy was perceived and practised in language learning at tertiary level in Hochiminh city, Vietnam. However, the participants of the study were limited to the English major students and their teachers in the context of a private university. As I have discussed in Chapter 1 and in section 3.6.1 above, this design allowed me to build up a rich picture of the perceptions and practice of learner autonomy in the research context of this study. In particular, this aim was facilitated by the employment of a wide array of data collecting methods, including survey, interviews, focus groups, learning contracts and learning diaries. Nevertheless, the case study design entails unavoidable limitations that I needed to take into account when conducting this research.

3.7.1 Generalisability

Due to its idiographic nature, case study research is often said to have limited generalisability (Cohen *et al.*, 2011; Yin, 2012). Statistically, it is true that findings in this study are not generalisable to a wider population because of the unique characteristics of the specific research context (see section 1.5). However, Yin (2009; 2012) argues for analytic generalisation which aims to ensure the ability to contribute to the expansion and generalisation of theory by helping researchers to understand other similar cases, phenomena, or situations. In other words, “analytic generalisations depend on using a study’s theoretical framework to establish a logic that might be applicable to other situations” (Yin, 2012: 19). To achieve analytic generalisation, I shall discuss how the study’s findings have informed my

understanding of learner autonomy in the research context and compare them with findings from other studies in similar contexts, *i.e.*, tertiary education in Vietnam (see section 2.8.4 and 9.2.1.5)

3.7.2 Researcher bias

Qualitative methods in a case study are also limited by the sensitivity and integrity of the investigator. Case study method is often the subject of the criticism that it “maintains a bias toward verification, understood as a tendency to confirm the researcher’s preconceived notions, so that the study therefore becomes of doubtful scientific value” (Flyvbjerg, 2006: 234). Guba and Lincoln (1981: 378) also refer to an “unusual problems of ethics. An unethical case writer could so select from among available data that virtually anything he wished could be illustrated”. To avoid this limitation, the researcher needs to be aware of biases that can affect the final product. This limitation, however, is more pertinent to qualitative case study (Merriam, 2009). Therefore, the use of mixed methods and assurance of criteria for rigorous quantitative and qualitative research in this study can help address this limitation.

3.8 Research participants

This section only provides general information about the research population to which the participants of my study belong in the broader context of the research location (see section 1.5). Sampling strategies will be discussed in the section about research instruments and detailed demographic information of the participants will be presented in the finding chapters (*i.e.*, Chapters 5, 6, 7).

3.8.1 Students

Students are the main subject in this study. The main student population which defines the scope of this study is students who were enrolled in the B.A in English

programme, which belongs to the Faculty of Languages and Cultural Studies of the University. In total, there were 403 students of four intakes from 2007 to 2010. Table 3.1 below presents the number of students in each intake. This cohort of students was asked to complete the questionnaire which aims to set the baseline for this study (see section 3.10.1 and 5.5).

Table 3.1: Number of B.A. in English students

Intake	Number of students
2007	66
2008	116
2009	105
2010	116

The main data were collected from a group of 30 students who voluntarily enrolled in a classroom-based 14-week intervention programme which was conducted by the researcher in the forms of learner training and syllabus adjustment in the context of English language classes. During the intervention, I used questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups as main data collection methods. Students were also required to enter into a learning contract and keep learning diaries. These written materials were also included in the data I collected.

The cohort of 373 non-intervention students was surveyed about their readiness for autonomy to determine a base level. These students were also invited to join focus groups which discuss learner autonomy and their learning experience. In addition, a questionnaire about students' perspectives on learner autonomy was administered to 116 non-intervention students of the 2010 intake. Data collected from non-intervention students allowed me to have an understanding of the general trends at the University and create a point of reference for comparison with the intervention students.

3.8.2 Teachers

In order to achieve a balanced view of learner autonomy at the University, I invited all the tenured and visiting English teachers to answer a questionnaire designed for them. Some teachers were subsequently interviewed to provide richer information on the topic. In total, 12 tenured and 9 visiting English teachers responded to my questionnaire. In addition, with the help of two colleagues who are teacher trainers, I managed to collect responses from 44 teachers who were attending an MA in TESOL course.

3.9 Ethical considerations

The awareness of ethical concerns has an important role in good educational research practice. A researcher in pursuit of truth must bear in mind that his action cannot jeopardise their subjects' rights and values (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). For this study, ensuring informed consent from the participants, maintaining their anonymity and gaining permission for access to the research setting were the key ethical measures I took. In order to do so, I asked the participants to read and sign consent forms, which clarified the purpose of my study, how information they provided would be used and how their identity would be kept confidential. These consent forms were included in the front page of the questionnaires distributed to the participants. As for interviews and focus groups, the participants were asked to sign a consent form before each session.

Besides, due to the nature of the relation between the participants and the researcher in some cases (i.e., student – teacher or teacher – management), I had to ensure the participants that they would be treated fairly and impartially if they did not want to participate in any part of the research. I also made sure that my presence and research

activities had been permitted by the institution and the information about data collecting processes and data collected were fully provided to and accessible by all participants. I followed ethical procedures set by the School of Education and the University of Nottingham while conducting my research. As for the intervention programme, besides making it available to the research group, I disseminated the programme to other teachers so that it can be offered to the rest of the cohort in the following semester.

3.10 Data collection instruments

In sections 3.5 and 3.6, I have argued that a mixed-method approach was deemed appropriate for the nature of the subject matter that I investigated. Therefore, I used a wide array of both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. Not only did this approach allow me to explore the situation from differing perspectives and gain deeper insight into their nature, it also reflected my ontological view about multiple realities and accommodated my epistemological position on the nature of knowledge. This section describes the data collecting instruments that I used in my research.

Table 3.2 below summarises the research questions and the data collecting instruments I used to find the answers to them.

Table 3.2: Research questions and instruments

	Research question	Instrument	Sample size
1	How ready are students of the University for autonomous learning?	Survey (RFAQ, PLAQ)	200 students
2	How motivated are the University's students to learn English?	Survey (RFAQ)	200 students
3	How is learner autonomy perceived and practised by teachers and students in the context of tertiary education in Vietnam?	Survey (RFAQ, PLAQ) Semi-structured interviews Focus group	30 teachers (10 within institution and 20 outside) 200 students (survey) 6 teachers (10 within institution and 10 outside) 3 groups (1 from the cohort and 2 from the intervention group)
4	What are the perceived effects of the learner training programme on the intervention students?	Focus groups Student diaries Semi-structured interviews	3 groups (18 students) 20 students 3 teachers
5	To what extent is culture perceived to play a role in the development and manifestations of learner autonomy in Vietnam?	Semi-structured interviews Focus groups Student diaries	20 teachers 3 groups (18 students) 20 students

3.10.1 “Readiness for autonomy” questionnaire

3.10.1.1 *Theoretical considerations*

As I have discussed in section 2.6.5 of the literature review, readiness for autonomy can be viewed from two perspectives, i.e., psychology and metacognition, which correspond to the notions of ‘willingness’ and ‘capacity’ in Holec’s (1981) definition of learner autonomy. In this conception, readiness consists of the positive attitudes and beliefs that enhance learners’ willingness to learn autonomously and the knowledge about learning factors which enables learners to carry out autonomous learning. This theoretical framework provided the justification for the items and design of the “Readiness for autonomy” questionnaire (RFAQ).

The RFAQ seeks to answer the following questions which are related to research question 1.

- I. How ready are students of the University for autonomous learning?
- II. To what extent do the students undertake self-initiated language learning activities?

In order to answer question (I), the RFAQ focuses on revealing learners’ metacognitive knowledge competence, including (1) knowledge about themselves as learners, (2) knowledge about their learning context (demands and opportunities), (3) knowledge about English as a subject to be learnt, and (4) knowledge of learning processes. It also attempts to examine learners’ willingness to take responsibility, which can be investigated through their confidence, disposition towards taking responsibility and perception of the teachers’ roles.

Besides investigating learners’ attitudes and metacognitive knowledge, the RFAQ also aims to establish whether there is evidence of autonomy in learners’ learning

activities. These include, among others, the extent to which they make use of available resources, create opportunities for practice, plan and monitor the learning process, and collaborate with others. To answer question (II), the questionnaire seeks to find out whether learners performed self-initiated learning activities in the semester prior to this study.

3.10.1.2 *The design of the RFAQ*

This questionnaire is intended only for students and is based on questionnaires used in previous studies by Cotterall (1995, 1999), Broady (1996), Spratt *et al.* (2002), Hsu (2005), and Thang and Alias (2007). Besides making changes to some of the original items, I have also added new items which I deem appropriate to the specific context of the study. These modifications will be discussed in the next section (see section 3.10.1.3). The RFAQ (see APPENDIX C) centres on two perspectives which have emerged in the literature review and investigation of previous studies into learners' readiness for autonomy, namely learners' metacognitive knowledge and their general willingness to take responsibility for their own learning.

The RFAQ consists of two parts: 'Practice' and 'Attitudes'. The order of these two parts was intended to avoid the awareness-raising effect of the questionnaire which may contaminate the data collected. Part 1, 'Practice', has 15 items. In this part, students are asked about their language learning activities inside and outside class. The questions are taken from Spratt *et al.* (2002). However, the question of frequency (i.e., never, rarely, sometimes, often) originally asked in Spratt *et al.* (2002), was also changed to a Yes/No question to check learners' actual performance of the learning activities.

Part 2 of the RFAQ, 'Attitude', has 50 items which are randomly ordered. These items belong to six categories (see APPENDIX D for a full list of the categories with their focus, number of items, and sources). Category 1 – Teachers' responsibility – has 15 items which focus on examining the students' beliefs about the role of the teacher. Five items in this category are from Cotterall's 1999 study, one from her 1995 study, seven from Spratt *et al.*'s (2002) study and two added by me. Category 2 - Acceptance and Desire for Responsibility – investigates the students' willingness to take more responsibility, with nine items from Broady (1996) and Thang and Alias (2007). These items explore students' beliefs about language learning in relation to self-study and the role of the teacher. This category also identifies whether students incline towards autonomous learning. Categories 3 to 6 examine the four aspects of learners' metacognitive knowledge competence. The first aspect, knowledge of themselves as learners, is investigated through nine items in category 3 - Metacognitive knowledge - oneself as a learner. These nine items are drawn from Cotterall (1999), Thang and Alias (2007) and my own addition. Categories 4 and 5 look into learners' language awareness and knowledge of the learning context respectively, with a total of 16 items mainly adapted from Hsu (2005). Category 6 is based on Cotterall (1999) and Hsu (2005) studies with items examining learners' knowledge about the learning processes. The items in the six categories in this section are arranged in random order and no attempt was made to artificially limit the number of questions in each group.

3.10.1.3 Modifications and addition of culture-related items

I added two new items to the group of items investigating learners' perceptions of teachers' responsibilities in Part 2. These items result from my discussion of the cultural tradition in education and the English language teaching context in Vietnam

in sections 1.2 and 2.6.2. Item 55 (*In my opinion, the role of the teacher is to provide answers to all my questions.*) is concerned with Confucian dimensions in Vietnamese education. Item 47 (*I think the role of the teacher is to explain grammar and vocabulary.*) is related to the discussion of the current state of affairs of English language teaching in Vietnam. Although the 15 items in this group are scattered in the questionnaire, the original stem (i.e., *I believe the role of the teacher is to ...*) was replaced with several other expressions with similar meaning so as to avoid the possibility that students may spot the pattern. Other forms of modification to this questionnaire include reformulating some items, changing geographical names, combining related items and omitting irrelevant items.

3.10.1.4 Full-length and shortened version

The initial RFAQ has 65 items. Due to the length of the questionnaire, I decided to administer it to the intervention students only. These students volunteered to enrol into the learner training programme. Hence they were motivated in and committed to actively participating into the research. As the non-intervention students, I created a shorter version of the RFAQ by leaving out ten items which are listed in Table 3.3 below.

Table 3.3: Items excluded from the shortened RFAQ

Item number and wording		Category
56	I know some differences between American English and British English.	Metacognitive knowledge: language awareness
57	I am aware that there are some sounds in English which do not exist in my language.	Metacognitive knowledge: language awareness
58	It's not cool to speak English in class.	Metacognitive knowledge: learning context
59	People in Vietnam who can speak English well have a better social status (e.g., they make more money; they are more educated, etc.).	Metacognitive knowledge: learning context
60	The university treats English as a very important subject.	Metacognitive knowledge: learning context
61	Learning idioms and phrases by heart can improve my spoken English.	Metacognitive knowledge: language awareness
62	There are a lot of opportunities to learn and practise English in Hochiminh city.	Metacognitive knowledge: learning context
63	I know some differences between spoken and written English.	Metacognitive knowledge: language awareness
64	Stressing the right word in a sentence is important for the correct meaning/emphasis. E.g., "That's MY bicycle", not "That is my BICYCLE".	Metacognitive knowledge: language awareness
65	Stressing the right part of an English word is important for the correct pronunciation. E.g., banAna, not bAnana.	Metacognitive knowledge: language awareness

Among the omitted items, six belong to the 'Metacognitive knowledge: language awareness' category. These items were left out because the shortened RFAQ was intended for non-intervention students whose knowledge about the language could greatly vary as they belonged to different years of the BA in English programme. The remaining four items belong to the 'Metacognitive knowledge: learning context' category. After the omission of ten items, the shortened version of the RFAQ has 55 items. These items were left out because the learning context has been discussed in detail in Chapter 1 (see section 1.3) and could be inferred from the full length questionnaire for intervention students. As far as I am concerned, this length is

suitable for encouraging the non-intervention students to complete and return the questionnaire.

3.10.1.5 *Validity and reliability*

- Validity

Validity is crucial to effective and worthwhile research. Ensuring validity is a complex matter which has to be continually dealt with throughout the course of research. Cohen *et al.* (2007: 133) list 18 different kinds of validity, ranging from content validity, criterion-related validity to theoretical validity and evaluative validity. For the RFAQ, validity can be seen as the question of whether the questionnaire really does “measure what it purports to measure” (Cohen *et al.*, 2007: 133). In answering this question I shall set out to discuss 3 types of validity that I consider to be keys to the effectiveness of the RFAQ: content validity, construct validity and cultural validity.

- Content validity

Content validity requires that the instrument “fairly and comprehensively covers the domain or items that it purports to cover” (Cohen *et al.*, 2007: 137). To this end, the RFAQ was designed to investigate thoroughly the key aspects of learners’ readiness for autonomy as discussed in the literature on foreign language learning. Nevertheless, the RFAQ was consciously kept at a practical length so as to avoid the effects of respondents’ fatigue caused by a long questionnaire. Therefore, the RFAQ items were carefully selected and/or modified in order to highlight the demonstration of learners’ readiness for autonomy in the specific research context.

- Construct validity

This form of validity deals with the articulation of the constructs which are ‘operationalised’ in the questionnaire (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). The main construct in question in the RFAQ is ‘readiness for autonomy’, whose meanings and implications have been discussed at length in section 2.9.2 of the literature review and section 0 of this chapter. The discussion of the background theoretical literature and approaches to measuring readiness for autonomy in previous studies provide the foundation for the construction of the underlying issues tackled in the questionnaire. As a result, it can be argued that the main constructs of the RFAQ are generally accepted and rooted in the literature in the field of language learning.

- Cultural validity

According to Joy (2003: 1, cited in Cohen *et al.*, 2007: 139), cultural validity is “the degree to which a study is appropriate to the cultural setting where research is to be carried out”. This type of validity has an important role in the present study because learner autonomy may be considered by some to be peculiar to the western culture (Jones, 1995) and may be unusual in the context of research. Therefore, to ensure the research is culture-fair and culturally sensitive, I have taken the following measures:

- drawing of items from other studies conducted in similar contexts, i.e., East Asian cultures,
- adding new items or modifying items so that they are appropriate and relevant to the context of the research,
- ensuring that the translation of the RFAQ is culturally appropriate and meaningful to the respondents,
- piloting the instrument to validate the quality of translation.

- Reliability

In terms of quantitative methodologies, the RFAQ was checked for internal consistency reliability using the Cronbach's α coefficient. In this process, items that adversely affect the overall consistency of the questionnaire were omitted from the data analysis (see Chapter 5). Moreover, as this questionnaire is part of a larger study which is mainly qualitative in nature, other criteria which are more appropriate to naturalistic research may apply. These include fidelity to real life, context- and situation-specificity, authenticity, comprehensiveness and meaningfulness to the respondents (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). These criteria are met through the process of questionnaire design and piloting.

3.10.2 "Perspectives on learner autonomy" questionnaire

3.10.2.1 *Theoretical considerations*

- Theoretical framework

As discussed in the literature review, although the aim of promoting learner autonomy is to enable learners to learn independently of teachers, this by no means undermines the role of teachers in the classroom. Regarded as part of a broader move towards learner-centred approaches in second language acquisition and pedagogy theories, learner autonomy requires teachers to relinquish traditional roles and take on new ones. Instead of being mere transmitters of knowledge, teachers become facilitators, mediators and advisors who help learners find out about themselves, their own needs and learning styles so as to learn more effectively.

In addition, it has been argued that autonomy is not an inborn capacity but can be promoted through education or social interactions (Holec, 1981, Sinclair, 2000a). Therefore, teachers can be instrumental in helping learners to develop their capacity, i.e., metacognitive knowledge, and enhance their willingness to become more

autonomous learners. According to Sinclair (2000a: 63), “the teacher takes an active role, as guide, demonstrator, informant, co-negotiator, counsellor, and facilitator in making learners more aware of the range of processes of learning and encouraging them towards the discovery of personally suitable learning strategies”. This helps build learners’ capacity to learn autonomously. In light of this, investigating teachers’ perspectives on their roles in promoting autonomous learning becomes indispensable in my study of fostering learner autonomy in the context of tertiary education in Vietnam. Moreover, an insight into the teachers’ perceptions of the extent of their responsibility, in comparison with that of the students’ responsibility, for learning activities inside and outside class allows me to understand how teachers evaluate their students’ ability to take responsibility for their own learning. As its name suggests, the “Perspectives on Learner Autonomy” questionnaire was designed to investigate the topics above, i.e., the extent to which teachers and students are responsible for learning activities inside and outside class, from the perspectives of teachers and students. In terms of research methodology, this enables me to triangulate between data collected from students and teachers by this questionnaire and data collected from students by the RFAQ.

- The research questions

This questionnaire – Perspectives on Learner Autonomy (PLAQ) – was designed to answer the question: ‘How is learner autonomy perceived and promoted by teachers and students in the context of tertiary education in Vietnam?’ The questionnaire has two versions, one for teachers and one for students. The version for teachers investigates teachers’ perceptions of their own and students’ roles in the classroom, their confidence in students’ capacity to take some control of their learning, their

suggestions for teaching and learning activities to promote learner autonomy, and their perceptions of context-related difficulties.

A shorter version of the PLAQ with Vietnamese translation was prepared for students to investigate the topics above from the students' perspective. In other words, the students' questionnaire seeks to explore students' view on the extent of their own and teachers' responsibility for learning activities inside and outside class and their perceptions of their own ability to take charge of those activities. The design of these two versions of the PLAQ will be discussed below.

3.10.2.2 The design of the PLAQ

This questionnaire (see APPENDIX E) was adapted from Chan (2003), primarily in order to parallel the RFAQ, which is intended only for students. The follow-up interview schedule was also adapted from the one used in the same study, i.e., Chan (2003). The questionnaire for teachers consists of four sections. Section 1, 'Responsibilities', has 13 items which seek to explore teachers' views as to who has the main responsibilities in various in- and out-of-class learning activities. Item 6 was reformulated (i.e., from 'decide the objectives of their English course' to 'set learning goals for their English course') to parallel with item in the RFAQ. Other items in this section can be mapped against those in the section on students' attitudes in the RFAQ (see Table 3.4).

Table 3.4: Mapping the PLAQ against the RFAQ

RFAQ	PLAQ
16. In my opinion, the role of the teacher is to give me regular tests to evaluate my learning.	10. Evaluating students' learning?
20. I need the teacher to set learning goals for me.	6. Setting learning goals for students for their English course?
27. I need the teacher to stimulate my interest in learning English.	3. Students' interest in learning English?
28. The teacher needs to point out my weaknesses in English.	5. Identifying students' weaknesses in English?
31. I'd like the teacher to help me make progress outside class.	2. Students' progress outside class?
33. The role of the teacher is to make me work hard.	4. Students working harder?
43. I think the teacher's responsibility is to decide what I should learn in English lessons.	7. Deciding what should be learned in English lessons?
45. I need the teacher to help me make progress during lessons.	1. Students' progress during lessons?
48. I need the teacher to choose activities for me to learn English.	8. Choosing what activities to include in the lessons?
50. In my opinion, the teacher should decide how long I spend on activities.	9. Deciding how long to spend on each activity in class?
54. I think the teacher should decide what activities I do to learn English outside class.	11. Deciding what students learn outside class?

However, two items from the RFAQ (i.e., ‘provide answers to all my questions’ and ‘explain grammar and vocabulary’) do not have their parallels in the PLAQ. The second section – ‘Abilities’ investigates how confident teachers are about their students’ ability to make important decisions in managing their own learning, such as choosing learning activities and materials, evaluating their learning and identifying their weaknesses. Section 3, ‘Autonomy and your teaching’, aims to examine the extent to which teachers are conscious of learner autonomy as a teaching goal and consider it to be important for effective language learning. These two questions may also help to trigger teachers’ awareness and consideration of the relevance of learner autonomy to their teaching. The final section, ‘Activities’, encourages teachers to draw on their experience and suggest teaching/learning activities that they consider contextually-suitable/feasible for use in promoting learner autonomy in Vietnam.

3.10.2.3 Full-length and shortened version

The full-length PLAQ described in the previous section is intended for teacher respondents only. As for student respondents, a shortened version of PLAQ was created. This version (see APPENDIX F) only has two sections, namely ‘Responsibility’ and ‘Ability’, which have the same number of items as the counterparts in the teachers’ full-length version.

3.10.2.4 Validity and reliability

In order to ensure the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, the same steps were taken as those discussed in section 3.10.1.5 for the RFAQ. Specifically, in terms of construct validity, the questionnaire was adapted from a previous study which was theoretically based on the work of Holec (1981) and Littlewood, 1999 (see Chan, 2003: 36). As far as reliability is concerned, data collected from this PLAQ allow

triangulation between the two questionnaires as they investigate learner autonomy in Vietnamese tertiary education from students' and teachers' perspectives.

3.10.3 Focus groups

3.10.3.1 *Theoretical considerations*

A focus group is “a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment” (Krueger, 1994: 6). According to Litosseliti (2003: 2), focus groups have the following characteristics:

- they are focused on a small number of topics
- they are interactive as participants respond to and build on the views expressed by others in the group
- they generate insightful information in the form of a wide range of opinions, ideas and experiences.

The use of focus groups is distinctive from group interviews in its emphasis on interaction and the explicit use of such interaction as research data. These features of focus groups were demonstrated in this study in how data were analysed in chapter 6 (see section 6.2.4.3). Among the uses of focus groups identified by Bloor *et al.* (2001), they were used in this study to collect data to complement quantitative methods. They were also used to investigate and challenge the findings of the questionnaires. Findings from focus groups were also use for triangulation in this study. The uses of focus groups and interviews (which will be discussed in the next section) are in line with Guba and Lincoln's (1994) suggestion for hermeneutical and dialectical methodologies, which advocate the use of interaction between and among investigator and respondents to elicit individual constructions of realities.

3.10.3.2 *Rationale*

- Objectives

In this study, focus groups were used as a major data collection method along with the RFAQ and PLAQ in order to

- encourage students to discuss/talk freely about their English language learning experiences,
- find out more from students' comments on the results of the RFAQ about their attitudes towards teachers' roles, general willingness to take responsibility and self-initiated learning activities,
- and understand learners' motivation and use of available resources in preparation for the intervention.

- Research questions

The focus groups were intended to obtain qualitative data to answer the following questions:

How ready are students in the University for autonomous learning?

How do they perceive their ability and confidence in learning?

How motivated are students to learn English?

What kind of motivation do the students have?

How is learner autonomy perceived and practised by students in the context of tertiary education in Vietnam?

3.10.3.3 *Focus group schedule*

There were seven questions to be discussed in each focus group (see APPENDIX G). They ranged from general enquiry about students' reasons for and experience of learning English to more specific questions about students' beliefs about language

learning, expectations of the teacher and awareness of autonomous learning. Questions 3, 4 and 7 used the results from the RFAQ as prompts to explore more deeply students' perception of roles and their learning preferences.

3.10.4 Semi-structured interviews

3.10.4.1 *Rationale of teacher interview*

- Objectives

In addition to quantitative data provided by the PLAQ, which investigates teachers' views of learner autonomy and students' ability, I conducted semi-structured interviews with the teachers to gain a more in-depth understanding of teachers' evaluation and practice of promoting learner autonomy in their teaching. Similar to the rationale of the student focus groups, the interviews with teacher seek to

- identify the underlying practical issues from the teachers' point of view that lead to their assessment of student's ability and the prospect of learner autonomy in tertiary education in Vietnam,
- encourage teachers to share their opinions and experiences about current teaching practices that are related to the promotion of learner autonomy among university students,
- find out more from teachers' comments and their explanations of the results of the RFAQ and TPAQ about their attitudes towards their own roles, their assessments of students' capacity for learner autonomy and their assumptions about students' needs.

- Research questions

With the rationale discussed above, the interviews with teachers was expected to yield information to answer the following questions

- Q1. How ready are students of the University for autonomous learning?
- Q2. How is learner autonomy perceived and practised by teachers and students in the context of tertiary education in Vietnam?
- Q3. To what extent is culture perceived to play a role in the development and manifestations of learner autonomy in Vietnam?

3.10.4.2 Rationale of student interview

- Objectives

The student interviews were conducted at the end of the intervention programme to collect students' opinions related to their learning experience, their attitudes towards the different learning tools used in the intervention, their perceptions of autonomous learning, and their future learning plan.

- Research questions

- Q1. How ready are students of the University for autonomous learning?
- Q2. What autonomous learning strategies do students use learning?
- Q3. What are the perceived effects of the learner training programme on the intervention students?

3.10.4.3 Interview schedule

- Teachers' interview (see APPENDIX H)

The interviews were intended to be semi-structured; therefore, the planned schedule only served to create a starting point for an informal conversation. After that, impromptu questions were added based on teachers' responses and my assessment of the situation. In summary, the schedule consists of questions about teachers' awareness of learner autonomy and their attitudes towards promoting autonomous learning. It also has questions which draw from the results of the RFAQ and PLAQ to

elicit teachers' explanations. Finally, there are questions which encourage teachers to share their experiences and concerns about their own teaching profession.

- Students' interview

The interviews with students were intended to be informal. Students were encouraged to talk about their independent learning using the learning contract and learning diary. I only asked questions about students' assessment of the course and their performance.

3.10.5 Learning contract and learning diaries

3.10.5.1 *Theoretical considerations*

In this study, learning contract and learning diary were used both as learning tools to promote learner autonomy and data collection tools. As learning tools, these instruments were designed to develop students' metacognitive capacity in setting learning goals, choosing learning materials, making learning plans, keeping record of learning, and assessing their learning. The rationale for using these tools to promote learner autonomy will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

As data collection tools, the learning contract was developed based on the instruments used by Knowles (1986) and McGrath (2006) while the learning diary was designed following Lai (2001)'s instrument. According to Lai (2001), there are two levels of operation in learner autonomy, namely macro and micro level. The macro level is related to self-direction which is defined by learners' ability to organise or manage their own learning process (Dickinson, 1987; Holec, 1996; Lai, 2001). In this study, this ability of students was investigated by using learning contracts as evidence of their goal-setting, study-planning, monitoring and self-assessment. The micro level refers to process control, i.e., "the learners' ability to self-monitor and self-evaluate

her learning tasks and/or learning strategies employed for each learning activity” (Lai, 2001: 35). This ability was examined by data collected by students’ learning diary, which documented their self-regulated learning process from selecting learning activities, setting task aims, and identifying problems to using learning strategies and assessing learning.

3.10.5.2 *Rationale of learning contract*

- Objectives

As I have discussed above, the learning contract was used to collect data about the students’ ability to manage their own learning process. Specifically, the learning contract was designed to provide evidence on how students (see APPENDIX I)

- set goals for their learning
- identified scope of learning
- chose relevant materials and learning activities
- set pace for learning
- monitored and conducted self-assessment

- Research questions

The data collected by the learning contract was purposed to provide the answers to the following research questions:

How ready are students of the University for autonomous learning?

What autonomous learning strategies do students use in learning?

3.10.5.3 *Rationale of learning diary*

- Objectives

The data collected by the learning diaries served to provide evidence of students' learning actions similar to those collected by the learning contract. However, the answers provided by the learning diaries are only specific to the task, or micro, level.

Thus, the diaries were used to explore how students (see APPENDIX J)

- chose learning activities
 - set aims for the tasks
 - identified their problems when carrying out the tasks
 - selected and adjusted learning strategies, and evaluated the learning process
-
- Research questions

The learning diaries collected data to answer the following research questions:

What are the students' autonomous learning preferences?

What autonomous learning strategies do students use in learning?

3.11 Research procedures and data collection process

3.11.1 Instrument piloting

Although the instruments were designed based on a sound methodological and theoretical framework, they could still be subject to misinterpretation when deployed in the research context. The reasons for this could be because the instruments are in essence a subjective product of the researcher based on his understanding and experience working in the field but these may not necessarily reflect the individual's conceptions. Moreover, since some parts of the instruments were adapted from those used in previous studies elsewhere, cultural appropriateness became an issue which had to be taken into account. Therefore, before using the designed instruments, I took several steps in piloting the instruments to ascertain their appropriateness, both in terms of culture and research methodology.

3.11.1.1 RFAQ

The first draft of the RFAQ was sent to my colleagues in Hochiminh city, Vietnam for comments on the cultural appropriateness and clarity of the items. After receiving the feedback from my colleagues, I made changes to the questionnaire in accordance with their suggestions. Table 3.5 below summarises these changes.

Table 3.5: Changes to the RFAQ as a result of feedbacks from pilot teachers

No	Old version	New version	Reason for alteration
11	Last semester, did you ever make suggestions to the teacher?	Last semester, did you ever make suggestions about English learning activities to the teacher?	To clarify the kind of suggestions students could make
19	I know the best way for me to learn English.	I know the best ways to learn and practise English for me.	To elaborate on self-study activities
21	I can identify my strengths and weaknesses.	I know my strengths and weaknesses.	To emphasise metacognitive knowledge about oneself as a learner
24	I am good at applying new ways/strategies of learning English.	I try new ways/strategies of learning English.	To change the focus from an assessment of one's own ability to an identification of ability
30	I am good at measuring my progress.	I am able to measure my progress.	As above
35	I don't feel I could improve without a teacher.	I think I could not improve without a teacher.	As above
37	I am good at finding resources for learning.	I am able to find resources for learning English on my own.	As above
39	I am good at setting my own learning goals.	I can set my own learning goals.	As above
42	I am good at planning my learning.	I plan my learning	As above
49	I am able to ask for help when I need it.	I ask for help in learning English when I need it.	To clarify the kind of help students may need

The questionnaire was then translated into Vietnamese and proof-read by two bilingual teachers to ensure the quality of translation. Before the questionnaire was

administered to the participants, I asked a group of five students to read the bilingual questionnaire again and comments on the readability of the Vietnamese translation. I also encouraged students to raise questions about terminologies they found unclear or difficult to understand. The final version of the questionnaire incorporated students' feedback (see APPENDIX C).

3.11.1.2 PLAQ

The Vietnamese and English versions of the PLAQ were sent to the Head of the Department of Anglo-Saxon language and culture of the University for him to comment. The final versions administered to teachers and students contain some amendments based on his suggestions (see APPENDIX E and APPENDIX F). Specifically, two items were added to section 2 of the questionnaire. These items are as follows:

How would you rate your students' ability to ...

23. ... plan their learning?

24. ... set their learning goals

These two items examine teachers' evaluation of two abilities which are essential to the students' capacity for autonomous learning. Therefore, the addition of these two items was considered to be necessary for a better understanding of the teachers' evaluation of students' capacity for autonomous learning.

3.11.1.3 Focus group and interview schedules

As the focus groups and interviews were semi-structured and informal, I decided not to pilot their schedules. However, during the research process, the schedules were continuously updated using results yielded by the quantitative instruments and feedback from participants.

3.11.2 Trust worthiness and authenticity

It has been argued that the concepts of validity and reliability, so important in quantitative research, cannot be addressed in the same way in qualitative work due to the ontological and epistemological differences between these two paradigms (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). Therefore, naturalistic investigators have preferred to use different terminology to distance themselves from the positivist paradigm (Shenton, 2004). Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose that the quality of naturalistic research (i.e., qualitative) should be addressed by ensuring its trustworthiness which consists of four evaluative criteria, i.e., credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, and parallels those of the positivist paradigm. Bryman (2008: 377) provides an elaboration of these criteria as follows:

1. Credibility (as paralleled with internal validity): How believable are the findings?
2. Transferability (as paralleled with external validity and generalisability): Do the findings apply to other contexts?
3. Dependability (as paralleled with reliability): Are the findings likely to apply at other times?
4. Confirmability (as paralleled with objectivity): Has the investigator allowed his or her values to intrude to a higher degree?

Lincoln and Guba (1986) then add the notion of authenticity as the fifth criterion for qualitative research. Authenticity includes five sub-criteria:

1. Fairness: Does the research fairly represent different viewpoints among members of the social setting? There should be a complete and balanced representation of the multiple realities in and constructions of a situation.

2. Ontological authenticity: Does the research help members to arrive at a better understanding of their social milieu?
3. Educative authenticity: Does the research help members to appreciate better the perspectives of other members of their social setting?
4. Catalytic authenticity: Has the research acted as an impetus to members to engage in action to change their circumstances?
5. Tactical authenticity: Has the research empowered members to take the steps necessary for engaging in action? The researcher should benefit all those involved – ethical issues of ‘beneficence’ (Bryman, 2008; Cohen *et al.*, 2011).

Although the terminology of reliability and validity is still in used in qualitative enquiry because it is argued that “the goal of finding plausible and credible outcome explanations is central to all research”, these two terms have been replaced by “criteria and standards for evaluation of the overall significance, relevance, impact, and utility of completed research” (Morse *et al.*, 2002: 3). There are various procedures and strategies to ensure trustworthiness and authenticity in qualitative research (Guba and Lincoln, 1981; Lincoln and Guba, 1986; Shenton, 2004; Onwuegbuzie *et al.*, 2010). In this study, I chose to apply the following strategies:

- Triangulation

This strategy allowed me to crosscheck data by the use of different sources and methods. Specifically, qualitative data collected by student focus groups and teacher interviews were compared to each other and to quantitative data collected by students’ and teachers’ questionnaires. The use of this strategy enabled me to ensure a greater level of credibility in my findings.

- Prolonged involvement

This strategy refers to “lengthy and intensive contact with the phenomena (or respondents) in the field to assess possible sources of distortion and especially to identify salencies in the situation” (Lincoln and Guba, 1986: 18). As the intervention programme lasted for fourteen weeks, I had a sufficient amount of time to gain an adequate understanding of the students’ needs and motivation and to establish a relationship of trust with them. This helped reduce reactivity and respondent biases.

- Negative case analysis

While making sense of the data and developing insights into what is going on, I actively searched for negative instances which could disconfirm my theory and adjusted the latter continuously until it addressed all the cases in the data (Lincoln and Guba, 1986; Shenton, 2004). In the analysis of teachers’ and students’ perceptions of their role in language learning, I took into account negative cases to represent the multi-realities of the truth and to challenge my own theory about their perceptions.

- Audit trail

In this study, I maintained an audit trail by keeping a record of research activities, including raw data (i.e., interview and focus group transcripts, examples of which can be seen in APPENDIX K), details of coding and data analysis. This strategy “allows any observer to trace the course of the research step-by-step via the decisions made and procedures described” (Shenton, 2004: 72).

3.11.3 Data collection plan

The data collection process can be divided into three phases. Because there were some overlapping periods among them, these phases only roughly followed

chronological order. Phase One was intended for collecting quantitative data related to students' and teachers' perceptions about their roles in language learning and their attitudes towards the current role assignment in the language classrooms. The data collected in this phase allowed me to set a baseline for the study and create a general understanding of the teachers' and students' beliefs and attitudes towards issues related to learner autonomy. The instruments used in this phase were the RFAQ and the PLAQ. Phase Two was solely reserved for collecting qualitative data to complement the quantitative data collected in Phase One. In the second phase, teachers were interviewed and students invited to attend focus groups. These sessions allowed me to go into details with the participants about their views on and explanations for the findings resulted from quantitative data. These were also the opportunities for me to encourage the participants to express their understanding about learner autonomy, their beliefs about language learning and teaching, and their attitudes towards promoting learner autonomy in language learning at the University. The sessions in Phase Two were guided by the semi-structured interview schedule and focus group schedule. Phase Three was solely concerned with qualitative data collected from intervention students. In this phase, intervention students submitted their learning contracts and learning diaries to me as a requirement of the learner training programme. Also, these students were interviewed about what they had done in the semester in terms of self-regulated learning, how they perceived of their learning experience and performance in the learner training programme, and what they plan for self-regulated learning in the following semester. Table 3.6 below provides a summary of the data collection process that took place at the University between September and December 2010.

Table 3.6: Data collection plan

Phase	Date (2010)	Tasks and Instruments	Participants
I	Week 1: Sep 13 – Sep 18	Pre-intervention survey – Full-length RFAQ	Intervention students
	Week 1 – 3: Sep 13 – Oct 2	Cohort survey – Shortened RFAQ	All B.A. in English students (except intervention students)
	Week 15: Dec 20 – Dec 25	Post-intervention survey – Full-length RFAQ	Intervention students
II	Week 3 – 5: Sep 27 – Oct 16	1 st Teacher survey – PLAQ for teachers	All English teachers at the University
	Week 4 – 6: Oct 4 – Oct 23	Student focus groups – Focus group schedule	3 groups of intervention and non-intervention students
	Week 7 – 9: Oct 25 – Nov 13	Teacher interview – Teacher interview schedule	Tenured teachers
	Week 10 – 11: Oct 15 – Oct 27	Student survey – PLAQ for students	First year B.A. in English students
	Week 11 – 12: Oct 22 – Dec 4	2 nd Teacher survey – PLAQ for teachers	Teachers attending M.A. in TESOL programme
III	Week 2: Sep 20 – Sep 25	Introduction to learner training and learning contract	Intervention students
	Week 3 – 4: Sep 27 – Oct 9	Negotiating students' learning contracts	Intervention students
	Week 4: Oct 3 – Oct 9	Collecting students' learning contract	Intervention students
	Week 3 – 13: Sep 27 – Dec 11	Learner training	Intervention students
	Week 5: Oct 11 - 16	Introduction to learning diary	Intervention students
	Week 16: Dec 27 – Dec 31	Collecting students' learning diaries	Intervention students
	Week 16: Dec 27 – Dec 31	Exit interviews – Learning contract and learning diaries	Intervention students

3.11.4 Instrument administration

3.11.4.1 RFAQ

For the intervention group, the full-length RFAQ was administered to students in week 1 of the intervention programme. At the end of the programme, the full-length questionnaire was re-administered to the intervention students. The intervention

group is a class of 30 students who enrolled in the Listening and Speaking 3 subject, which was taught by the researcher. I distributed the questionnaire to the students after talking to them about the benefits and importance of completing the questionnaire in a truthful manner. I stressed that the questionnaire would help raise the students' awareness of how they learn and offer insights into what they want to learn. Also, the questionnaire would allow me to understand the students better. Hence I could help them learn English more effectively through the learner training programme. Additionally, I also ensured the students about confidentiality and neutral treatment whether or not they decided to participate in the study. Students were asked to complete the questionnaire at home and hand it back in a week later.

With the cohort, I had the assistance from my colleagues in the Faculty to administer the shortened RFAQ to the students. I organised an informal seminar to inform the teachers about the purposes of the study and the benefits in terms of awareness teachers and students could gain by participating in the survey. During the first three weeks of the semester, these teachers administered the questionnaire to students in their class. The complete questionnaires were collected by these teachers before being handed back to me.

3.11.4.2 PLAQ

The teacher version of the PLAQ was distributed to tenured and visiting teachers of English at the University by the researcher between week 3 and 5 of the semester. Teachers were requested to complete the questionnaire at home and return it to the Faculty office. However, as the return rate of the teachers was extremely low, especially for visiting teachers, I decided to extend the scope of teacher population. During week 11 and 12 of the semester, with the help of two colleagues who are

teacher trainers of an MA in TESOL programme at another university, the PLAQ was administered to trainee teachers when they were attending their training sessions. This extension of the research population allowed me to investigate the possibility of extending the findings to the broader context of foreign language teaching in tertiary education in Hochiminh City.

The student version of the PLAQ was administered to first year students of the BA in English programme by my colleagues in week 10 and 11. Similar to the deployment of the RFAQ, I asked my colleagues to inform the student respondents about the purposes of the questionnaire and the benefits of answering in the survey. The student respondents were asked to sign the consent form included in the questionnaire. The complete questionnaires were collected by my colleagues before handing back to him.

3.11.4.3 Focus group

Students who expressed in the RFAQ that they were interested in joining the focus groups were selected in an attempt to reflect the structure of the sample population. From the students' responses, I managed to arrange three focus groups, two of which were from the intervention class and one from the cohort. Each focus group consisted of 4-6 students and lasted 45-60 minutes. The focus groups took place between weeks 4 and 6 of the semester. I took the role of facilitator and note-taker. The focus groups were audio- and video-recorded. Before each session, I asked the focus group participants to sign the consent forms. During the course of the discussion, students were given a table summarising the statistical results of the RFAQ and the PLAQ as a starting point for encouraging them to talk in more detail about their learning experiences. I used the focus group schedule to guide the discussion and asked

questions based on students' comments on the results of the RFAQ and PLAQ. At first, the students took turns to answer my questions. However, they soon became more interactive and offered their opinions freely. There were interactions among students as they commented on each other's opinions or expressed disagreements. An example of diverging student opinion can be seen in the interaction below (see also a sample of focus group transcripts in APPENDIX K for more examples).

Luc: I like to create opportunities for myself. I mean doing what I like helps me learn better because I learn it naturally.

Phuong: I agree, but not anyone can do that. There were some grammar points that I did not care about. However, after signing the learning contract, I started to pay attention to them and find them interesting. I started to like something I used to hate. Therefore, the teacher has created an opportunity for me to know what I like so I can engage in learning. (Focus group 2 – Luc & Phuong – Q4)

During such interactions, I only raised questions when I needed the students to clarify their points or when I felt that the ideas had ran out.

3.11.4.4 Interviews

This study involved interviews with both teachers and students. Six tenure teachers from the University agreed to be interviewed to share with me their understanding about learner autonomy and how it is related to their teaching. Between week 7 and 9 of the semester, I arranged interviews with the teachers. These interviews were conducted after class in the staffroom at the teachers' convenience. The duration of these interviews varied from half to three quarters of an hour.

The interviews with students were conducted based on the students' learning contracts and learning diaries which they were encouraged to submit to me as part of the module's assessment. In week 16, twenty-five students agreed to talk to me about

their experience in following the learning contract and using the learning diary to monitor their self-directed learning. Each student was allowed approximately five minutes to review their learning objectives in the contract, report what they did to achieve them, and evaluate their learning effort. After the students' talk, I asked them questions about the benefits or disadvantages of using the contract and diary and whether they wanted to continue to use them in their future learning. These interviews were audio-recorded with students' consent.

3.11.4.5 *Learning contract and learning diary*

The learning contract was introduced to the intervention students at the beginning of the learner training programme. In week 2, the students were briefed about how to identify their learning needs, set learning objectives and make a learning plan to achieve them. They were then given a week to revise their plans. During that period, they were required to attend individual tutorial sessions to discuss their plans with the teacher. The students revised their learning contracts, made two copies and submitted one copy to me in week 4. After that, the students were guided on how to keep a learning diary and to use it as a tool to manage learning. The students were asked to keep the diary every week from week 6 to week 15. The students submitted the whole learning diary in week 16 when they were interviewed by me about their experience in doing self-directed learning.

3.11.5 Summary of collected data

Table 3.7 below summarises the quantity of data collected by the instruments deployed in each phase of this study. An extended table summarising how the data were used to answer the research questions is also included in APPENDIX B.

Table 3.7 Summary of collected data

Phase	Instruments/Methods	Participants	Quantity
I	Full-length RFAQ	Intervention students – Pre-intervention	21 completed questionnaires
	Shortened RFAQ	All B.A. in English students (no intervention students)	213 completed questionnaires
	Full-length RFAQ	Intervention students – Post-intervention	21 completed questionnaires
II	PLAQ for students	First year B.A. in English students	92 completed questionnaires
	PLAQ for teachers	English teachers of the University and other universities	65 completed questionnaires
	Student focus groups	3 groups of intervention and non-intervention students	3 recordings (app. 1 hour each)
	Teacher interviews	Tenured teachers	6 recordings (app. 30 minutes each)
III	Learning diaries	Intervention students	15 diaries
	Learning contracts	Intervention students	23 contracts
	Student interviews	Intervention students	25 recordings (app. 5 minutes each)

3.12 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have developed a philosophical and methodological foundation for my research study. After discussing the relationship between research and knowledge and reviewing current competing research paradigms and traditions, I have introduced the constructivist-interpretive stance I adopted in this study. The chapter also introduced the employment of mixed method research strategies, which allowed me to use data collecting instruments and analytical approaches from both quantitative

and qualitative methods to investigate the issues raised in this study. With this foundation, the rest of the chapter presented the design of this study, including the context, ethical considerations, research questions, data collection instruments, and the research procedures. The chapter ends with the descriptions of the data collection process and a summary of collected data. The next chapter will present the learner training programme which was used in the study to promote greater learner autonomy and to serve as a basis for data collection.

CHAPTER 4. FOSTERING LEARNER AUTONOMY - AN INTEGRATED LEARNER TRAINING PROGRAMME

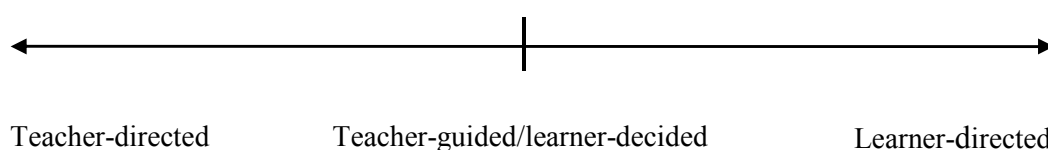
4.1 Introduction

In Chapter 2, I have provided a detailed account of the origin, meanings and significance of learner autonomy and highlighted its implications in the field of language learning. I have also introduced learner training as a means to develop learner autonomy. In this chapter, I shall discuss approaches to learner training in the language classroom and justify the approach I chose to implement learner training for the purpose of promoting learner autonomy in the context of my study. After that, I shall review learner training models in the literature and introduce the model I used in this study. Finally, I shall present the components of the programme and their underlying principles.

4.2 Approaches to Learner Training

As discussed in 2.7.4.2, researchers and practitioners in the field of language education have put forward various ways to distinguish and categorise approaches to promote learner autonomy in language learning (e.g., Benson, 2001, 2011; Oxford, 2011). Among these, Sinclair (2000a) offers an alternative way to situate the different practices of learner training by looking at the balance of control over the learning processes by teacher and learners (see APPENDIX K for a full description). According to her, approaches to implementing learner training can be mapped along a continuum, with one extreme being teacher-directed and the other learner-directed (Sinclair, 2000a). Figure 4.1 illustrates this conception.

Figure 4.1: The continuum of learner training approaches (Sinclair, 2000a)



From this point of view, programmes of training, such as ‘study skills’ modules or ‘strategy training’ (i.e., like those which emerged from positivist origins in North America, e.g., O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990), with content pre-determined by the teacher and an aim to train all of the students in the same set of strategies or skills, can be classified as ‘teacher-directed’ (Sinclair, 2000a). Hsu (2005: 92) posits that this “skill-focused and top-down approach” is also associated with the technical version of autonomy or strategy training. Although this approach has been argued by Hsu (*ibid.*) to be suitable in a “more conservative Confucian culture [...] where most learners have been conditioned to be passive and reticent in class”, I do not find it a good choice for the educational context in which I am conducting my study. First, the learners in my study were adolescent students who were developing strong awareness of their own needs. Thus, this imposed structure may conflict with their “deep psychological need to be self-directing” (Knowles, 1986: 27). Second, the credit-based curriculum adopted by the University provided the necessary flexibility to encourage and allow students to make choices about the courses they wanted to learn according to their needs. Therefore, the students in my study were willing to take a more active role in learning.

In contrast to the teacher-directed approach, the learner-directed approach prioritises fulfilling whatever learners want to learn. As a result, there is no specific, pre-determined syllabus. In this approach, all aspects of learning are negotiable between learners and the teacher and among learners themselves (Sinclair, 2000a; Hsu, 2005).

The teacher in this case acts as a facilitator who helps learners perform the learning activities of their choice. This approach has been reported to work well in the context of Danish secondary school English classes (Dam, 1995). However, in the context of this study, this approach does not seem to be suitable because it would be too abrupt a change for Vietnamese students who are used to being teacher-dependent and it would also be hindered by the prescribed and exam-oriented syllabus in place.

Having reviewed the teacher-directed and learner-directed approaches to learner training, I shall move on to discuss the compromise approach introduced by Sinclair (2000a), namely teacher-guided/learner-decided, and argue that this approach to learner training is suitable in the context of my study. According to Sinclair (2000a), this approach is based on a constructivist view of learning in which learners are encouraged to explore and find out on their own how best to learn the language. In this approach, the teacher accepts and respects learners' choices. In Sinclair's (2000a: 63) words, the teacher acts as a "guide, demonstrator, informant, co-negotiator, counsellor, and facilitator in making learners more aware of the range of processes available to them for learning the language and encouraging them towards the discovery of personally suitable learning strategies". This approach explicitly focuses on making learners aware of the process of learning. It also stresses on helping learners reflect and develop metacognitive awareness and strategies (*ibid.*). In the light of this view, Sinclair (2000a: 66) defines learner training as follows:

Learner training aims to help learners consider the factors that affect their learning and discover the learning strategies that suit them best and which are appropriate to their learning context, so that they may become more effective learners and take on more responsibility for their own learning.

I believe this approach to learner training is suitable for the context of my study. Firstly, it creates a gradual transfer of classroom control from teacher to students, which familiarises students with independent learning and paves the way for greater learner autonomy. Secondly, when learner training is integrated with a language course, this approach also fits well with the exam-oriented syllabus (*c.f.* Jing, 2006; Lo, 2010) because it ensures that the main learning outcomes are achieved while learners learn how to learn more effectively and take more responsibility for learning.

4.3 Models of learner training

This section reviews the models of learner training on which the intervention programme in this study is based.

4.3.1 Dickinson and Carver (1980)

One of the earliest attempts to plan learner training is Dickinson and Carver's (1980) identification of three areas in which learners need preparation for autonomy, namely psychological preparation, methodological preparation, and practice in self-direction. More important is the suggestion of the types of classroom activities that are specific to each area, for example, activities to build confidence for experimenting with language, activities to help learners understand and use metalanguage and to become aware of the rationale behind classroom activities, activities which provide learners with opportunities to make choices about their learning. Not only does this provide "useful criteria for devising materials for learner training" (Ellis and Sinclair, 1989: 7), although Dickinson and Carver (1980) do not express it explicitly, I suggest that these areas can also be regarded as a sequence of practical steps to develop learner autonomy in the language classroom. These areas of preparation for learner autonomy

were incorporated in the intervention programme through activities suggested by Ellis and Sinclair's (1989) framework presented in the next section.

4.3.2 Ellis and Sinclair (1989)

Based on research into the Good Language Learner and language learning strategies (Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975; Naiman *et al.*, 1978; Rubin and Thompson, 1982), Ellis and Sinclair (1989: 2) define a learner training model that "aims to help learners consider the factors which affect their learning and discover the learning strategies which suit them best so that they may become more effective learners and take on more responsibility for their own learning". This broad model provides learners with aspects of metacognitive knowledge in language learning (understanding self, language, learning process and context) which serve to enhance their willingness and build their capacity to be autonomous learners. Although the model offers a different sequence of practical steps in the training process, its contents cover and reflect the areas of preparation suggested by Dickinson and Carver (1980). Ellis and Sinclair's (1989) model comprises two stages. The first stage prepares learners for language learning by focusing on metacognition. The aims of this stage are reflection and awareness-raising by asking learners to think about their expectation, learning preferences, needs, commitment, motivation, and learning environment. The second stage, namely skills training, develops learner strategies (metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective). The process in this stage is divided into seven steps:

1. How do you feel ...? (Affective factors)
2. What do you know ...? (Language awareness)
3. How well are you doing ...? (Self-assessment)
4. What do you need to do next ...? (Short-term goal setting)
5. How do you prefer to learn ...? (Learning strategies)
6. Do you need to build up your self-confidence ...? (Risk-taking)

7. How do you organise ...? (Exploiting and organising resources & learning)

Ellis and Sinclair's (1989) model is presented in Figure 4.2 below.

Figure 4.2 Framework for learner Training (Ellis and Sinclair, 1989: 2)

<i>Stage 1 Preparation for language learning</i>	
1.1 What do you expect from your course?	
1.2 What sort of language learner are you?	
1.3 Why do you need or want to learn English?	
1.4 How do you organise your learning?	
1.5 How motivated are you?	
1.6 What can you do in a self-access centre?	

<i>Stage 2 Skills training</i>	<i>How do you feel ...?</i>	<i>What do you know ...?</i>	<i>How well are you doing?</i>	<i>What do you need to do next?</i>	<i>How do you prefer to learn/practise ...?</i>	<i>Do you need to build up your confidence?</i>	<i>How do you organise ...?</i>
<i>Skills</i>	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Step 7
2.1 Extending vocabulary							
2.2 Dealing with grammar							
2.3 Listening							
2.4 Speaking							
2.5 Reading							
2.6 Writing							

Ellis and Sinclair's (1989) learner training model provides a useful framework for the intervention programme in this study because it offers a systematic approach to developing learners' ability for detachment, i.e., to employ strategic thinking about

their learning and making decisions about what and how they want to learn. This model is also compatible with Cohen (1998:66-7) suggestion that strategy training should help learners to:

- self-diagnose their strengths and weaknesses in language learning;
- become more aware of what helps them to learn the language they are studying most efficiently;
- develop a broad range of problem-solving skills;
- experiment with both familiar and unfamiliar learning strategies;
- make decisions about how to approach a language task;
- monitor and self-evaluate their performance;
- transfer successful strategies to new learning contexts.

In order to achieve these objectives, I employed learning contracts (see section 4.3.3 and 4.5.2) and learning diaries (see section 4.5.5) to enhance learners' metacognitive knowledge about the learning processes. The contracts require reflection and planning. The learning diaries require monitoring and self-assessment. These capacities are believed to enhance self-direction and learner autonomy in language learning (Cohen, 1998; Little, 1991; Wenden, 1991). The design and implementation of these learning tools in the learner training programme will be discussed in subsequent sections in this chapter.

4.3.3 Knowles (1986)

Knowles (1986) suggests that using learning contracts is highly appropriate in adult learning in institutions of higher education. According to Dressel and Thompson (1973, cited in Knowles, 1986), contract learning takes its conceptual roots from the theory and practice of independent study in the 1920s, which was stimulated by the philosophy of John Dewey (1859-1952). For these authors, independent study is

referred to as “an ability to be developed in some measure in every student. It means motivation, curiosity, a sense of self-sufficiency and self-direction, ability to think critically and creatively, awareness of resources, and some ability to use them” (Dressel and Thompson, 1973: 7, cited in Knowles, 1986: 40). Obviously, it can be argued from this definition that developing students’ ability to pursue academic competence in an autonomous, self-directing manner has the same resonance for learner autonomy as for independent learning. The concept of independent learning was incorporated with individualised instruction and self-directed learning and lifelong learning to form a comprehensive theoretical framework for a model of learning and instruction called ‘andragogy’ (i.e., the art and science of helping adults learn), in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Knowles, 1986). Knowles (1986: 41) firmly contends that “[c]ontract learning is an approach to education that is most congruent with the assumptions about learners on which the andragogical model is based”. These assumptions are:

- The need to know
- The need to be self-directing
- The need to have the learners’ unique experiences taken into account
- The need to gear learning to the learners’ readiness to learn
- The need to organise learning around life-task or life-problems
- The need to tap into intrinsic motivations

From these assumptions, Knowles (1986) proposes an eight-step model to develop a learning contract:

1. Diagnose your learning needs
2. Specify your learning objectives
3. Specify learning resources and strategies
4. Specify evidence of accomplishment
5. Specify how the evidence will be validated

6. Review your contract with consultants
7. Carry out the contract
8. Evaluation of your learning

In the field of language education, learning contracts have been used as a means to promote independent learning and learner autonomy in various studies (e.g., McGarrell, 1996; McGrath, 2006; Šliogerienė, 2006; Lai, 2007; Ismail and Yusof, 2008). However, in order for this model to be effective, learners need a good deal of metacognitive knowledge which can be provided through learner training. They also need time to build this capacity before they can develop a good learning contract (Ismail and Yusof, 2008). Therefore, I find that learning contracts can be incorporated with a learner training programme which can help learners identify their learning needs and objectives, find learning resources, experiment with learning strategies, monitor and evaluate learning. The design of learning contract and how it is employed in the intervention programme will be discussed in detail in section 4.5.2.

4.4 Implementing Learner Training at the University

4.4.1 Overview

The learner training programme devised for this study was integrated with a language course and conducted at the University in one semester between September and December 2010. This fourteen-week long course was offered to second year students of the BA in English programme. The course consisted of two parts: the main language course and the integrated learner training programme (ILTP). There were 3 hours of class meetings each week. The first two hours were devoted to the main language course, leaving the last hour for the ILTP. However, this order was followed flexibly during the semester, depending on students' affective factors, such as their

motivation for or attitude towards learner training. The content and structure of these parts are presented below.

4.4.2 The main language course: Listening and Speaking 3

This course is the third and final course in the language skill series of the BA in English programme at the University. The series is designed to equip first- and second-year students of the programme with sufficient language skills, namely speaking, listening, reading, and writing, to prepare them for core courses in Business English, English Linguistics, English Language Teaching, and English Translation and Interpreting, which are taught in English. It must be stressed that, although these students passed the English test in the National University Entrance Examination to be able to choose to major in English at the University, their English was approximately at lower-intermediate level. Bearing in mind the fact that English is a foreign language in Vietnam and the predominant method of English language teaching in school is grammar-translation with a focus on written examination, this entry level is common and understandable.

According to its syllabus (see APPENDIX M), the Listening and Speaking 3 course “aims to train students for academic success” by showing students how to listen to lectures and take notes effectively and to discuss with other students. After taking this course, students are expected to acquire effective strategies for listening to lectures, such as recognising lecture language for lecture plan, idea transition, generalisation, repetition, clarification, cause and effect, and so on. At the same time, the course provides students with strategies for effective note-taking, such as outlining, using abbreviations, and using indentation. Also, the course creates opportunities for students to improve their communication skills by discussing academic related topics

with others. With all these learning outcomes, students are expected to successfully develop the skills which will enhance their ability to learn effectively in English medium courses offered in their third and fourth year.

The course used a book called “*Lecture Ready 2: Strategies for Academic Listening, Note-Taking, and Discussion*” (Sarosy and Sherak, 2006), published by Oxford University Press, as the main course book. The book has five units, each of which consists of two chapters. The chapters cover a wide range of topics from Marketing, Sociology, and Linguistics to Science and Media Studies. However, only eight chapters were chosen by the module convenor to be taught to the students, leaving the remaining two chapters for students to study on their own.

4.4.3 The Integrated Learner Training Programme

As I have discussed in section 4.3, the ILTP was developed based on Ellis and Sinclair’s (1989) two-stage framework, which also incorporates Dickinson and Carver’s (1980) areas of preparation for learner autonomy, and the employment of learning contracts (Knowles, 1986; McGrath, 2006) and learning diaries (Lai, 2001) as learning tools to assist students in taking control of their learning. In particular, the ILTP was designed to cover the topics presented in the schedule in Table 4.1. The topics were divided into two stages: preparation for language learning (Week 1-4) and skill training (Week 5-15).

Table 4.1 Learner training schedule

Week	Content
1	Learners' beliefs and learning styles <i>What do you expect from your course?</i> <i>What sort of language learner are you?</i>
2	Learners' needs and goal setting <i>Why do you need or want to learn English?</i> <i>How do you organise your learning?</i>
3	Learning contract and learning materials <i>How motivated are you?</i>
4	Learning resources <i>What can you do in a self-access centre?</i>
5	Extending vocabulary
6	Student presentation on Extending vocabulary
7	Dealing with grammar + Student presentation
8	Mid-term
9	Learning Listening + Student presentation
10	Improving Listening skills
11	Learning Speaking + Student presentation
12	Improving Speaking skills
13	Learning Reading + Student presentation
14	Improving Reading skills
15	Learning Writing skills + Student presentation

4.4.3.1 Stage 1: Preparation for language learning (Week 1-4)

The first four weeks were devoted to reconditioning students' awareness of their own attitudes towards English language learning. As they are in their second-year of the BA in English programme, it was sensible to assume that students had more or less developed their position on how to learn the language. However, it was necessary to give them a systematic revision so as to help students reflect their understandings of

English language learning and abandon misconceptions. Therefore, this stage allowed students to look into their own learning beliefs and learning styles. The first stage also aimed to reactivate students' purposes for learning English in order to enhance their motivation by personalising the goal of learning. One important feature of this stage is that students were allowed and encouraged to identify and choose an area or skill of language that they want to improve in relation to their learning needs. They were asked to set their own learning goals and form a group with a common interest on one of the six areas and skills in English so that they could collaborate on finding out ways to improve the chosen skill. Besides raising students' awareness of themselves as learners, the first stage helped to make them more aware of possibilities and opportunities for learning in their context. Moreover, students were made familiar with learner training activities, such as goal setting, planning, reflecting, and self-assessing.

4.4.3.2 Stage 2: Skills training (Week 5-15)

Stage 2 sought to introduce to students effective ways to learn an English skill so that they could choose those that suit them best. In the first stage, students were asked to think about their learning needs, identify language areas or skills for improving, and set learning goals. Based on the decisions reached in these activities, students formed groups according to their chosen language area and skills. The skills training sessions were designed to follow the seven steps suggested by Ellis and Sinclair (1989: 2) (see Figure 4.2). However, students were given the opportunities to work in groups to research effective learning methods/strategies in their chosen skills and areas and present their findings to the class. This activity allowed students to work on their own, as well as in collaboration with others, to explore different possibilities and try out new ways to improve their language skills. The presentations were led by students

and the teacher only played the role of a facilitator. The students found this activity exciting and were engaged in it by asking the presenting groups questions about their learning experience and strategies.

4.5 Components of the Integrated Learner Training Programme

With the two-stage framework discussed above, the ILTP had the following components.

4.5.1 Learner Awareness

Raising learners' awareness of factors of language learning is an important goal of the ILTP. The following areas are suggested by Karlsson *et al.* (2007: 50), which can also be found in the ILTP.

1. Reflection about language learning.
2. Consciousness-raising of language learning strategies.
3. Analysis of students' own strategies.
4. Analysis of language needs, present and future.
5. The students' own objectives.
6. Making preliminary plans and thinking about areas of interest.

These areas were covered in the content and learning activities of the first and second stage of the ILTP. Specifically, the first stage helped students achieve items 1, 4, 5, and 6 while the second stage provided them with items 2 and 3. These areas of learner awareness were also covered in other components of the ILTP and will be discussed below.

4.5.2 Plans and contracts

Making learning plans and contracts was also an important component of the ILTP. In the first two week of this training programme, the students were taught how to set suitable learning objectives based on their language needs. Students were introduced

to the principles of SMART objectives (i.e., specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely) and how to incorporate these into a learning contract. In the fourth week of the training programme, students handed in their learning contracts (adapted from McGrath, 2006). The contract has two parts: Objectives and Action plan (see APPENDIX I). In the Objectives section, students were asked to list three learning objectives for the rest of the semester. In the Action plan section, they specified how they would go about achieving the objectives. The action plan includes the following items:

- Objectives/Focus
- How student plans to achieve this goal ...
- When the student will do the work; how often and how long it will take ...
- Whether the student has achieved the objectives
- Evidence

Students were asked to provide information for the first three items, leaving the remaining two for (self-)assessment at the end of the semester. The contracts were made into two copies, one for the teacher and one for the student. The students were reminded to refer to the learning contract for the learning objectives of the semester. However, it was also made clear to them that they could adjust the objectives if they found that they were not able to fulfil the original objectives due to unforeseen circumstances, such as over-ambitious goals, limited time availability, health problems etc. This opportunity for adjustment encouraged critical thinking about their goals and progress, developing metacognitive knowledge about themselves as learners, the subject matter to be learnt, their learning context and learning process.

At the end of the ILTP, students attended a revision session in which they submitted their learning contract and learning diary and individually talked to the teacher about

their learning experience. This session allowed students to assess their own performance in self-directed learning and describe their future learning plan, which lasted beyond the intervention period.

4.5.3 Skill support groups

Attending the ILTP, students were required to form groups that shared an interest in a specific language skill or area. This provided them with the opportunities to share their learning experiences and learn new learning strategies. This process also developed students' ability as it enabled them to engage in "acquiring new information and skills progressively and later applying them in increasingly appropriate way" (Siegel, 2012: 79). The fact that students had to prepare and make a presentation on how to learn a skill also led to students becoming more aware of the learning process because they were required to find materials about the strategies to learn the skills they chose (see APPENDIX N).

4.5.4 Counselling

Three counselling sessions were organised in week two for the students to clarify their learning contracts. In the counselling sessions, students brought along their learning contracts and presented it to the teacher. The teacher then asked questions for students to elaborate on their learning plan. The students were also encouraged to talk about their expectations and difficulties in making decisions about components of the learning contract, such as identifying goals, selecting learning materials and strategies, allocating time. Besides the counselling sessions, students could make an appointment to talk to the teacher in his weekly office hours. However, few students made use of this facility.

4.5.5 Record keeping and evaluation

Together with the learning contract, the learning diary was an important tool to help raise learners' awareness of the learning process (Finch, 2011) and develop their metacognition (Jing, 2006). Learning diaries allowed students to keep track of their day-to-day self-directed learning activities and helped them gain insights into their own learning. The learning diary also served as an important data collecting tool (see section 3.10.5.3). Adapted from Lai's (2001) instrument, the learning diary consists of the following items (see APPENDIX J):

- Date/time
- Activity
- Task aim
- Brief content summary
- Problems
- Strategies
- Self-assessment

Keeping a learning diary helped students reflect on their learning and practise metacognitive strategies learned in the first stage of the ILTP. Specifically, it required students to identify task aims and select suitable learning strategies. It also made students look into the problems they were faced with when learning, try out solutions to these problems and evaluate their learning.

4.6 Principles for learner training for learner autonomy

According to Hsu (2005), there are at least 11 principles for learner training for learner autonomy, as promoted by researchers and practitioners of autonomy (see APPENDIX O). These principles are related to the training content, training activities, materials, learners' role, and the learning process. Among them, I argue that four overarching principles are crucial for the success of any learner training

programme, namely i) explicitness, ii) reflection, iii) empowerment, and iv) contextualisation.

4.6.1 Explicitness

Explicitness (or *Informedness*) is mainly referred to as essential criterion for materials for learner training (e.g., in Sinclair and Ellis, 1992; Sinclair, 1996). In the scope of this study, this criterion also applies to the whole training programme, including its content and approach. The explicitness of the learner training programme is defined as the extent to which the learner-training aspects are made obvious to the learner (Sinclair, 1996). These aspects are the purpose and goals of the programme and activities and the strategies to try out. In the case of my intervention programme, students were made aware of its learner-training purpose before they enrolled into the course. They were also given a course outline which informed them about the content and objectives of the programme.

Besides, it is important to focus not only on making what to learn explicit but also on helping learners learn how to learn. Citing Wenden (1987: 160), Sinclair (1996: 153) posits that “an explicit focus on learning to learn enables learners to focus on and evaluate strategies that they may be able to apply to different learning situations, to understand what they are doing and why”. This explicitness was achieved by the structuring of each session, the sequence and rubrics of tasks, and the teachers’ guidance (see APPENDIX P for an example). In other words, in each session, students were presented with a learning problem and the strategies to deal with them so that they could choose the one that suits them for practice.

4.6.2 Reflection

The concept of reflection can be ascribed to Dewey (1993), who is acknowledged as one of the key figures who introduced it in the twentieth century. Drawing on the ideas of earlier educators, such as Plato, Aristotle, Confucius, Lao Tzu, Solomon, and Buhda, Dewey considers reflection to be “a special form of problem solving, thinking to resolve an issue which involved active chaining, a careful ordering of ideas linking with its predecessors” (Hatton and Smith, 1995: 33). In education, reflection allows a person to take the perspective of an outsider to observe a certain problem related to his own learning. Thus when one reflects about one’s learning, one becomes one’s own critic to evaluate one’s learning process and identify weak spots in it (Raya *et al.*, 2007). According to Hatton and Smith (1995: 34), “reflection may be seen as an active and deliberate cognitive process, involving interconnected ideas which take account of underlying beliefs and knowledge”. Therefore, reflection about learning helps learners look inside themselves and challenge their own beliefs. In learner training for learner autonomy, this has crucial implications because the aim of this process is to develop learners’ understanding of themselves and other factors affecting their learning so as to enhance their confidence and willingness to take responsibility for their own learning. Wenden (1991) argues that giving learners the opportunity to think about their learning process is important because it can help learners become aware of their own beliefs and how these in turn influence what they do to facilitate language acquisition. In terms of learning strategies, reflection is useful as it entails the development of planning, goal setting and self-evaluation skills which are crucial metacognitive strategies. It also enables learners to evaluate the strategies they use.

In the ILTP, students' reflection about learning was developed through activities using a self-questioning technique (Ellis and Sinclair, 1989) which required them to consider their personal attributes, preferences as well as the learning process and their own learning context. Reflection was also enhanced by the use of a learning contract and learning diary. While the former provided a starting point for the management of learning and self-evaluation throughout and at the end of the semester, the latter guided learners through a constant process in which students reviewed, evaluated and adjusted their actions to fulfil the goals they set in their learning contract.

4.6.3 Empowerment

The principle of empowerment in learner autonomy has often been referred to with a political orientation (Raya *et al.*, 2007). This position draws on Critical Theory to argue for a wider and more social and political view of autonomy. In this vein, the issue of control in the learning process should not be confined to the classroom settings but can be extended to the exertion of one's control over other aspects of life. Autonomy, then, means that a man learns to become "producer of his society" instead of being "product of his society" (Janne, 1977: 15, cited in Holec, 1981). However, Sinclair (2000a: 81) has warned against promoting "social empowerment through encouraging learners to take control of their own learning" because "[t]his is not without its dangers and is [...] an unrealistic aim in many contexts". In my view, such a demand for radical social change through the promotion of learner autonomy (e.g., Benson, 1997, Pennycook, 1997) seems to be inappropriate in the political and ideological context in which the study takes place. Therefore, in this study, I shall stop short of exploring empowerment in autonomy from a socio-political perspective. Instead, I choose to focus on learners' psychological development in terms of self-beliefs and self-efficacy in the process of role-changing (Little *et al.*, 2002). This

position is ardently advocated by Sinclair (2000a: 82), who contends that “[c]ritical theory in learner autonomy [...] relates to the uncovering of the learners’ inhibitions and constraints in relation to the learning process and to enabling them to consciously to construct approaches which maximise their own learning and personal potential within their own learning context”.

In the training programme, students were encouraged to take on more responsibility in a gradual process. Initially, the teacher was the person who set the agenda and offered students options. Students were guided to make their own decisions concerning classroom activities, as well as self-study at home. Additionally, students’ self-beliefs were addressed by learner training activities that encouraged them to look into their own feelings about learning language skills and sharing their experience with other students. Opportunities were given to enhance their self-efficacy as they searched for effective learning strategies to fulfil their learning contract and to contribute to their presentation group.

4.6.4 Contextualisation

The principle of contextualisation underpins two important requirements for the training programme. First, learner training needs to be “subordinate to and integrated with the language learning aims of a course” as the main goal of the students remains language learning (Sinclair, 2000a: 48). Besides, in order to avoid resistance by students who feel they may be wasting valuable learning time, the inclusion of learner training in the language learning programme must be made explicit to the students before the start of the programme (*ibid.*). As for this study, the principle of contextualisation was adhered to by the integration of the training programme with an existing course in language skill, namely ‘Listening and Speaking 3’. Students

enrolling in this course were required to achieve the same core learning outcomes and awarded the same number of credits as the original language skill course. With the integration of learner training, the course had extra learning outcomes and modified forms of assessment. Hence it was named Listening and Speaking 3 (Intensive). All these modifications were communicated to students via public announcements before they enrolled in the course. Students received a detailed course syllabus and were reminded one more time at the beginning of the course about its aims, structures, and requirements. An opt-out option was also offered to them.

Second, the training programme needed to take into account students' cultural traits (Sinclair, 2000a; Wenden, 1991). This requirement was met by the approach adopted in the implementation of the programme. In other words, as students received education in a Confucian Heritage Culture context in which they were used to the teacher-centred teaching method, a gradual approach was taken in which, little by little, the teacher transferred more control to the students and they were encouraged to take greater responsibility for their own learning. This approach was reflected by the prescribed syllabus for the first half of the course and the student-run syllabus for the second half.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed approaches to and models of learner training in the language classroom and accounted for the ones implemented in this study. The chapter justified the appropriateness of the teacher-guided/learner-decided approach in a learner training programme in Vietnam based on Knowles' (1986) and Ellis and Sinclair's (1989) models. The resulting Integrated Learner Training Programme was introduced with detailed descriptions of its components and underlying principles.

The following chapters will present data collected from teachers and students during the course of the learner training programme in this study.

CHAPTER 5. PHASE ONE - QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is the first of the three chapters devoted to presenting findings from the analysis of the data collected through various data collecting methods in this study. In this chapter, I shall present how quantitative data generated by the questionnaires used in Phase One of the study were processed and analysed. In doing so, I shall provide findings yielded by statistical analysis of the data and offer my interpretations and explanations. The findings and interpretations presented in this chapter are intended to serve as a base-line for understanding the current perceptions and practice of English language learning and teaching in tertiary education in Vietnam from the perspectives of learner autonomy. Finally, I shall attempt to pinpoint the underlying themes in the findings which will be used in Chapter 8 to establish a link between the results from fieldwork and the theoretical framework to shed light on the issues I aim to investigate in this study.

5.2 Data management and coding

Quantitative data were collected using two questionnaires, namely the RFAQ and PLAQ. As I have mentioned in Chapter 3, these questionnaires were administered both by me and my colleagues. Each completed questionnaire was given a coded sheet number which was hand-written on the first page. The coded sheet number consists of a code representing some typical characteristics of the respondents and a number showing the sheet's order in the pile. This was an important measure because it allowed me to distinguish data between students from different intakes, between students in the intervention and the non-intervention groups, between pre- and post-

intervention, and between students and teachers. Moreover, this also made it easier for me to double-check data input to avoid typing mistakes. Below is a table summarising the codes that I used for numbering answer sheets.

Table 5.1: Coding table for questionnaire sheets

Instrument	Code	Participants	
RFAQ	IB	Pre-intervention students	
	IA	Post-intervention students	
	A	Cohort	First year students
	B		Second year students
	C		Third year students
	D		Fourth year students
PLAQ	S	Students	
	T	Teachers	

Information from the completed questionnaires was then loaded onto SPSS, a commercial computer application which allows statistical analysis of quantitative data. Data were then double-checked to ensure correctness and processed for analysis. Additionally, questionnaire items that had been negatively formulated were reversely coded. As for the RFAQ, prefixes were added to the items of the questionnaire in accordance with their pre-factorised categories. These categories will be referred to as ‘scales’ in this thesis.

- ‘TR’: Teachers’ responsibility
- ‘ADR’: Acceptance and Desire for Responsibility
- ‘MKKS’: Metacognitive knowledge - oneself as a learner
- ‘MKLP’: Metacognitive knowledge - learning process
- ‘MKLC’: Metacognitive knowledge - learning context
- ‘MKLA’: Metacognitive knowledge - language awareness

Before presenting and describing the statistical findings of the RFAQ and PLAQ produced by SPSS, I shall provide a demographic description of the participants in these two questionnaires.

5.3 Descriptive demographic information

5.3.1 RFAQ

The respondents of the RFAQ belonged to two groups: (i) the non-intervention cohort, i.e., English major students who did not attend the learner training programme (ILTP) and (ii) the intervention group, i.e., the group of students who chose to take the ILTP which was integrated into the Listening and Speaking 3 module. Data collected from these two groups of respondents allowed me to establish a baseline for my study and assess the possible impacts of the ILTP on fostering learner autonomy at the University.

5.3.1.1 Non-intervention cohort

The non-intervention respondents consist of 213 students and account for 57% of the total research population. Most of them are first-year students (42.3%). Second-year and third-year students account for 28.2% and 23.9% of the respondents respectively. The number of fourth-year student respondents is the smallest, only 5.6%. This proportion reflects the constituent parts of the population of English major students at the university.

In terms of respondents' gender distribution, the majority of the respondents are female (79.8%). Male students account for only 17.4%, while the remaining 14.1% of the respondents did not provide information about gender. This gender distribution is no surprise because female students tend to choose to major in language more than their male counterparts.

As for respondents' experience in learning English, this ranges from three to sixteen years depending on which year they were in at the University. However, a large proportion of the students had spent seven to eight years learning the language (26.4% and 19% respectively). Some respondents had studied English for nine or ten years (10.9% and 17.2% respectively). In general, this means most respondents started to learn English at the beginning of their secondary level (Grade Six, age twelve), which is also the grade that English is introduced into the national curriculum.

5.3.1.2 Intervention group

As I have described in Chapter 3, the intervention group is a class of 30 students who enrolled in the Listening and Speaking 3 module. The RFAQ was administered to all students at the beginning and the end of the course. However, I only managed to yield 21 comparable sets of responses because nine students failed to return the questionnaire either at the beginning or the end of the course.

Nineteen of the respondents in the intervention group are English major students. Only two are non-English major students. There are 18 second-year, one third-year and two fourth-year students. Amongst the respondents only 9.5% are male while 90.5% are female. This distribution is more uneven than that of the cohort in terms of the predominant number of female students. Like the non-intervention cohort, most respondents have seven to nine years of experience in learning English, which indicates that they started to learn the language in Grade Six (seven years = 10.5%, eight years = 52.6%, and nine years = 21.1%).

5.3.2 PLAQ

The PLAQ was administered in two versions, one for teachers and the other for students.

5.3.2.1 Teachers

65 teachers completed the questionnaire and returned the answer sheets to me. There are 59 Vietnamese and only 6 foreign teachers. In terms of gender, 36.1% of those who disclosed their gender are male and the rest are female. Four respondents (6.2% of all respondents) did not state their gender.

As for the question about which university the respondents were currently teaching at, 64% of them revealed their institutions. A high percentage of respondents (35.4%) did not say which university they were teaching at. Of those who did answer the question, 21 teachers (50%) were currently employed by the University and 21 teachers were from other universities in Hochiminh city (50%).

In terms of teaching experience, the majority of the teachers have one to eight years of English language teaching experience (78%). Two teachers stated that they had 20 years of experience, while the most experienced teacher had 25 years. The average years of English language teaching experience of the teacher respondents are 6.23.

5.3.2.2 Students

This questionnaire was administered to first-year English-major students at the University. 95 out of 116 (82%) students completed the questionnaire. Only 57.6% of the respondents stated their gender. Among them, 86.8% are female and 13.2% are male.

5.4 Reliability

5.4.1 All items

Before statistical tests were deployed to analyse the quantitative data collected by the RFAQ, a reliability analysis of the items to obtain the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the whole questionnaire and each measuring scale was conducted to ensure internal consistency among the questionnaire items. This analysis also established the level of reliability of the test scores produced by the collected data.

The RFAQ has two versions, a full-length questionnaire of 65 items for intervention students and a shortened version of 55 items for non-intervention students. Because the shortened RFAQ was administered to a considerably larger population (N=213) compared with the full-length questionnaire (N=21), data collected by the former were used in the reliability analysis for the overlapping parts of the two versions (the TR, ADR, MKKS, and MKLP scales; see section 5.2). The RFAQ administered to the non-intervention students has 55 items, of which 40 are Likert-type (i.e., items in Section 2). However, from the results of the reliability analysis of all items and scales, four items were left out due to their negative influence which resulted in low reliability level in some pre-factorised groups of items. The details of this omission will be discussed later in this section (see section 5.4.3 and 5.4.5). These items are listed in Table 5.2 below.

Table 5.2: Items excluded from the RFAQ in data analysis

Items	Scales
In English classes in my university, we speak a lot of English.	MKLC
Success in English is regarded as very important in my family.	MKLC
It is cool to speak English with native speakers (e.g., Americans) on the street	MKLC
I don't feel I could improve without a teacher.	ADR

The remaining 36 items of Section 2 of the shortened RFAQ produce a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .731, which indicates a satisfactory level of internal consistency among items and good statistical reliability. APPENDIX Q provides a full list of Cronbach's alpha coefficients by items.

Section 2 of the full-length RFAQ administered to the intervention group has 50 Likert-type items, including 40 items from the shortened RFAQ. Although the reliability analysis of the shortened RFAQ resulted in the omission of 4 items (Table 5.2), only one of them was excluded from the full-length RFAQ (i.e., 'I don't feel I could improve without a teacher'.) because it had a negative effect on the reliability of the ADR scale in both the shortened and full-length RFAQ. The remaining three items, which belong to the MKLC scale, were kept for comparison among intervention students between pre- and post-intervention because they did not affect the reliability of the MKLC scale in the full-length RFAQ (see sections 5.4.5 and 5.5.5). The reliability analysis of 49 items in Section 2 of the full-length RFAQ resulted in a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .766, which represents good internal consistency among items.

5.4.2 Teachers' responsibility (TR)

Of all the pre-factorised groups of items, the "Teachers' responsibility" scale achieves the best Cronbach's Alpha coefficient at .793. The items in this scale were taken from Cotterall's (1995) Readiness for learner autonomy questionnaire which was administered to university students in New Zealand.

5.4.3 Acceptance and Desire for Responsibility (ADR)

In contrast to the 'Teachers' responsibility' scale, the 'Acceptance and desire for responsibility' scale did not yield a good Cronbach's Alpha coefficient ($\alpha = .589$ for 8

items, see APPENDIX R). In order to achieve a better reliability coefficient, factor analysis was conducted on all questionnaire items, except for those belonging to the ‘Teachers’ responsibility’ scale. The result of factor analysis with an extraction of 2 factors indicated that two more items, one from the ‘Metacognitive knowledge - oneself as a learner’ and the other from the ‘Metacognitive knowledge – learning process’ scales were found to be highly related to the ‘Acceptance and desire for responsibility’ scale. These items are as follows.

- MKKS: I think I have the ability to learn English well.

- MKLP: I try new ways/strategies of learning English.

Although these items were initially intended for exploring students’ metacognitive knowledge for autonomous learning, their contents can be considered to be closely related to the notions of students’ acceptance and desire for responsibility as they aim to reveal students’ self-confidence in learning and willingness to take risks in trying new learning methods. Therefore, these items were removed from their respective scales and added to the ‘Acceptance and desire for responsibility’ scale. Furthermore, the item “I don’t feel I could improve without a teacher” from the original scale (Table 5.2) was also left out to increase the overall Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of this group of items. This item was omitted because it tends to be more suitable for exploring students’ perception on teachers’ roles. With one item omitted and two newly added, the reliability analysis of the scale resulted in a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of .627 (9 items, see APPENDIX R). This new reliability coefficient is reasonably acceptable to the deployment of statistical tests and interpretation of the results of data handled by SPSS.

5.4.4 Metacognitive knowledge (MKKS and MKLP)

The metacognitive knowledge scale of the shortened RFAQ originally consisted of 17 items which sought to explore students' knowledge about themselves as learners, the learning process, and the learning context. In order to maintain a reasonable length for the questionnaire to improve the rate of return, the items related to metacognitive knowledge about English (language awareness) were not included in the RFAQ for the non-intervention students. Results of the reliability analysis determined that 3 items related to metacognitive knowledge about the learning context (Table 5.2) had to be excluded from the metacognitive scale for it to obtain a good level of reliability. Two more items were also withdrawn from this scale to include in the 'Acceptance and desire for responsibility' scale, as discussed above (see section 5.4.3). The metacognitive scale, with 12 items taken from Cotterall (1995) and Thang and Alias (2007), achieves a good overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .727.

5.4.5 Metacognitive knowledge (MKLA and MKLC)

This scale was only included in the full-length RFAQ administered to the intervention students. With 13 items, the scale achieved a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .677. This reliability level can be considered to be acceptable. Table 5.3 provides a summary of the reliability coefficients of the questionnaires and its scales.

Table 5.3: Summary of Cronbach's alpha coefficients

Scales	Number of items	Cronbach's α
RFAQ (non-intervention)	36	.731
RFAQ (intervention)	49	.766
TR	15	.739
ADR	9	.627
MKKS and MKLP	12	.727
MKLA and MKLC	13	.677

5.5 Findings from RFAQ

5.5.1 Students' learning habits

Section 1 of the RFAQ was intended to investigate the students' habits in learning English. In particular, it sought to identify which learning activities, especially self-initiated ones, were popular among students. The findings in this section can be used in connection with findings from other instruments to explain students' habits and preferences in autonomous learning. Table 5.4 below displays students' learning activities in the semester preceding the intervention. These activities are ranked in descending order according to the percentage of non-intervention students who claimed to have performed them.

Table 5.4: Students' learning habits across 3 groups

Question <i>In the last semester, did you ...</i>	Non-intervention	Pre-intervention	Post-intervention
1. listen to English songs or English radio	95.75%	95%	100%
2. watch movies or TV programmes in English	93.87%	95%	90%
3. discuss learning problems with classmates	88.57%	67%	86%
4. read English materials (notices, newspapers, magazines, books, etc)?	78.30%	81%	86%
5. write in English (email, diary, face book, blog)	77.83%	71%	76%
6. talk to foreigners in English	70.28%	81%	67%
7. ask the teacher questions when you didn't (don't) understand	70.00%	90%	76%
8. read reference books (grammar, vocabulary, skills) on your own	66.04%	67%	86%
9. assess your own work	62.38%	52%	71%
10. take opportunities to speak in English in class	57.14%	71%	76%
11. make a learning plan	56.67%	62%	71%
12. practise using English with friends, e.g., English speaking club	36.02%	33%	33%
13. talk or write to your teacher about your study	27.01%	19%	48%
14. do English self-study in a group	11.85%	10%	5%
15. make suggestions about English learning activities to the teacher	10.95%	19%	29%

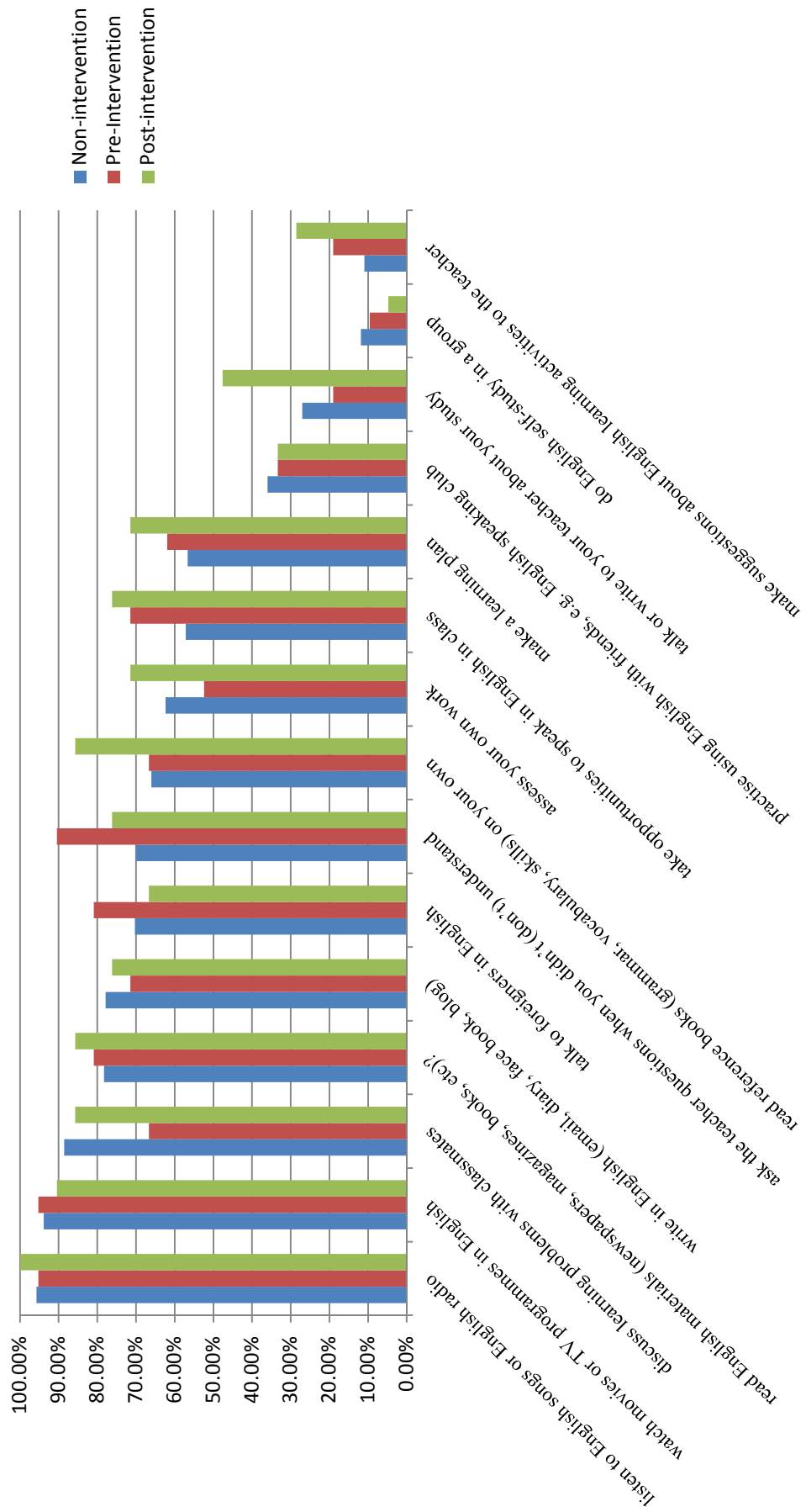
Table 5.4 shows that audio-visual media, such as English TV programmes and music are the most popular sources of language input among the students. Other less popular sources come from the social sphere where students discuss learning with friends and teachers, speak and write to others in English, and read English materials. Regarding students' management of learning, activities such as assessing one's own work and making a learning plan are only found in the lower half of the table. This indicates that not many students had the habit of using metacognitive strategies to manage their own learning. It is also striking that only a few students stated that they communicated with teachers about their study or made suggestions about English learning activities. These findings raise the issues of fostering students' ability to manage their learning and encouraging them to communicate with their teacher to improve learning ability and enhance their roles in the classroom. These issues will be discussed further in Chapters 6 and 7.

When the learning habits of non-intervention and intervention students are compared, it is found that among seven activities which are less popular to the intervention students, four activities have considerable discrepancy between the two groups. They are activities 3, 5, 9, 13 (see Table 5.4). In other words, fewer students in the intervention group than the non-intervention one reported to have discussed learning problems with classmates, written in English, assessed their own work, and talked or written to teacher about their study in the semester preceding the intervention. However, the intervention students were keener on activities 6, 7, 10, 11, 15 (see Table 5.4) than the non-intervention cohort. They were more likely to have talked to foreigners in English, asked teachers questions when they did not understand, taken opportunities to speak English in class, made a learning plan, and made suggestions about English learning activities to their teachers.

Figure 5.1 provides a visual comparison of the learning habits between the non-intervention and intervention students (pre- and post-intervention) based on the data presented in Table 5.4. It can be seen that the intervention students reported an increase in the use of 10 out of 15 activities. Among them, there were marked increases in activities 3, 8, 9, 11, 13 and 15. These activities are: ‘discuss learning problems with classmates’, ‘read reference books (grammar, vocabulary, skills) on your own’, ‘assess your own work’, ‘make a learning plan’, ‘talk or write to your teacher about your study’, and ‘make suggestions about English learning activities to the teacher’. In fact, these increases can be attributed to the ILTP as it encouraged students to manage and monitor their learning, take the initiative in learning in and outside class, consult the teacher and collaborate with classmates to improve learning (see CHAPTER 4 for full details of the ILTP).

Figure 5.1 also shows decreases in three activities of the post-intervention students, namely ‘talk to foreigners in English’, ‘ask the teacher questions when you didn’t (don’t) understand’ and ‘do English self-study in a group’. The first activity can be said to be dependent on the students’ learning context. The students might not have had any opportunities to speak to foreigners during the semester when the intervention took place. As for the second activity, the students might have learned to work out learning problems on their own or with their classmates before resorting to asking the teacher. They might have encountered fewer problems in learning during the intervention programme. Regarding self-study in a group, the students were asked to work in groups outside class to prepare for presentations about aspects of the English language (see section 4.5.3). Perhaps, for the students this group work was not regarded as ‘self-study’ although they had the control as for what to learn and when and where to meet.

Figure 5.1: Students' learning habits



5.5.2 Teacher's responsibility

5.5.2.1 A comparison between the non-intervention cohort and intervention group

Table 5.5: TR scale (Non-intervention cohort vs. intervention group)

Non-intervention cohort (N=213)				Pre-intervention group (N=21)			
		M	SD			M	SD
22	The teacher needs to point out my weaknesses in English	4.07	0.885	22	The teacher needs to point out my weaknesses in English	4.29	0.956
46	I need the teacher to help me make progress during lessons	3.89	0.782	25	I'd like the teacher to help me make progress outside class	4.05	0.973
42	In my opinion, the teacher is responsible for explaining why we are doing an activity	3.86	0.712	42	In my opinion, the teacher is responsible for explaining why we are doing an activity	4.05	0.805
25	I'd like the teacher to help me make progress outside class	3.85	0.826	19	I need the teacher to stimulate my interest in learning English	4.00	1.095
19	I need the teacher to stimulate my interest in learning English	3.84	1.025	46	I need the teacher to help me make progress during lessons	3.90	0.852
57	In my opinion, the role of the teacher is to provide answers to all my questions	3.79	0.966	57	In my opinion, the role of the teacher is to provide answers to all my questions	3.62	1.203
48	I think the role of the teacher is to explain grammar and vocabulary	3.54	0.863	29	The role of the teacher is to make me work hard	3.52	1.123
29	The role of the teacher is to make me work hard	3.43	0.972	48	I think the role of the teacher is to explain grammar and vocabulary	3.48	0.814
62	I think the teacher should decide what activities I do to learn English outside class	3.17	0.916	62	I think the teacher should decide what activities I do to learn English outside class	3.43	1.363
8	I need the teacher to set learning goals for me	3.15	1.139	50	I need the teacher to choose activities for me to learn English	3.29	0.845
50	I need the teacher to choose activities for me to learn English	3.08	0.863	53	In my opinion, the teacher should decide how long I spend on activities	3.19	0.75
53	In my opinion, the teacher should decide how long I spend on activities	3.00	0.926	3	In my opinion, the role of the teacher is to give me regular tests to evaluate my learning	3.14	0.964
3	In my opinion, the role of the teacher is to give me regular tests to evaluate my learning	2.98	1.005	13	It is the teacher's responsibility to create opportunities for me to practise	3.14	1.014
13	It is the teacher's responsibility to create opportunities for me to practise	2.95	1.057	14	I think the teacher's responsibility is to decide what I should learn in English lessons	2.86	0.964
44	I think the teacher's responsibility is to decide what I should learn in English lessons	2.92	0.827	8	I need the teacher to set learning goals for me	2.67	1.065
Valid N (listwise): 202				Valid N (listwise): 20			

Table 5.5 displays students' responses to items in the RFAQ concerning teacher's responsibilities. These responses are organised into 2 columns which represent the cohort and the intervention group. The items in each group are ranked in order by their mean scores. These mean scores were computed from students' responses measured by a five-level Likert scale (i.e., 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree). To highlight the stratification of the items according to the students' responses, a line is drawn at the 3.0 and 3.5 mean score marks on the table.

In general it is apparent that the respondents hold quite high expectations of teachers' responsibility in the English language class. For the cohort, 11 out of 15 items have a mean that is greater than 3 (Neutral). This expectation is even higher in the intervention group as 13 out of 15 items have a mean that is greater than 3. These numbers are striking because, besides the fact that they indicate that the respondents expect a lot from their teachers, this could mean that the students are quite dependent on the teachers.

Although there is difference in the order of the items, the top six teachers' responsibilities that respondents from both the cohort and the intervention group were most inclined to agree on are

- pointing out their weaknesses (item no. 22)
- helping them make progress outside class (item no. 25)
- explaining why they are doing an activity (item no. 42)
- stimulating their interest in learning (item no. 19)
- helping them make progress during lesson (item no. 46)
- providing answers to all questions (item no. 57)

These six items, with their mean scores ranging from 3.79 to 4.07 for the cohort and from 3.62 to 4.29 for the intervention group, indicate that respondents tend to agree that teachers' roles include making students aware of themselves, giving them direction and motivation, and providing explanation and information. The high mean scores of the items 'pointing out their weaknesses' (item no. 22) and 'explaining why they are doing an activity' (item no. 42) given by respondents from both groups reveal the students' desire for being informed about their own performance and the learning process. Item number 22 also reflects the prevalent teacher-student power-relation in the Vietnamese cultural context where teachers are regarded as having the ultimate expertise to teach and assess students (P.M. Nguyen *et al.*, 2005). Item number 42, however, might be a surprise to the teachers because they may think of themselves as 'experts' whose instructions should be followed without being questioned. In fact, teachers may not see the importance of explaining to the students about the purposes of the classroom activities. Hence, they may ignore this step in their teaching. L.C.T. Nguyen and Gu (2013: 25), however, suggest that the teachers

“might either perceive this to be a point for students to think about, or be influenced by the implicitness of the Vietnamese culture where most people prefer their interlocutors to arrive at conclusions or draw implications by themselves from what is said or taught.”

The remaining four items in the list above are related to the roles of the teachers in enhancing students' interest, consolidating their knowledge, and facilitating their progress in learning. In other words, students attribute a major part of their success in learning to the input from the teacher.

The next five responsibilities that respondents from both intervention and non-intervention groups agreed that teachers should take are

- making them work hard (item no. 29)

- explaining grammar and vocabulary (item no. 48)
- deciding activities to learn outside class (item no. 62)
- choosing activities for them to learn (item no. 50)
- deciding how long they should spend on an activity (item no. 53)

It is interesting to note that this group of responsibilities depicts a traditional teacher-controlled classroom where the teacher's job is to make their students work hard using the old-fashioned grammar-translation methods and controlling all activities both inside and outside the classroom. A comparison between this group of five items and the group of six items with higher mean scores above reveals a note-worthy pattern in the students' preferences. The use of directive verbs, such as 'make', 'choose ... for ...', and 'decide', in the formulation of the items in the former might have sounded less appealing to the respondents than those in the latter, such as 'help', 'provide', and 'stimulate'. Therefore, it can be concluded that although the respondents tend to respond positively to most teacher's roles in class, they seem to display a preference for guiding and facilitating ones.

There is one noticeable difference between the non-intervention cohort and the intervention group in their perceptions of teachers' responsibility regarding 'setting learning goals'. The mean score of the responses from the non-intervention cohort is just above neutral, at 3.15. The intervention group, by contrast, are considerably more negative in their response to this item (2.67). For the intervention group, it seems undesirable for teachers to set learning goals for them. This may indicate that students in the intervention group had better ideas about what they want to study and stronger desires to control their own learning.

5.5.2.2 A comparison between the intervention groups pre- and post-intervention results

Table 5.6: TR scale (Pre-intervention vs. Post-intervention)

Pre-intervention (N=21)				Post-intervention (N=21)			
		M	SD			M	SD
22	The teacher needs to point out my weaknesses in English	4.29	0.956	22	The teacher needs to point out my weaknesses in English	4.19	0.68
25	I'd like the teacher to help me make progress outside class	4.05	0.973	25	I'd like the teacher to help me make progress outside class	3.90	0.768
42	In my opinion, the teacher is responsible for explaining why we are doing an activity	4.05	0.805	19	I need the teacher to stimulate my interest in learning English	3.86	0.91
19	I need the teacher to stimulate my interest in learning English	4.00	1.095	46	I need the teacher to help me make progress during lessons	3.86	0.793
46	I need the teacher to help me make progress during lessons	3.90	0.852	57	In my opinion, the role of the teacher is to provide answers to all my questions	3.81	1.209
57	In my opinion, the role of the teacher is to provide answers to all my questions	3.62	1.203	42	In my opinion, the teacher is responsible for explaining why we are doing an activity	3.81	0.68
29	The role of the teacher is to make me work hard	3.52	1.123	13	It is the teacher's responsibility to create opportunities for me to practise	3.62	0.669
48	I think the role of the teacher is to explain grammar and vocabulary	3.48	0.814	29	The role of the teacher is to make me work hard	3.62	0.973
62	I think the teacher should decide what activities I do to learn English outside class	3.43	1.363	48	I think the role of the teacher is to explain grammar and vocabulary	3.52	1.03
50	I need the teacher to choose activities for me to learn English	3.29	0.845	62	I think the teacher should decide what activities I do to learn English outside class	3.38	0.865
53	In my opinion, the teacher should decide how long I spend on activities	3.19	0.75	53	In my opinion, the teacher should decide how long I spend on activities	3.33	0.796
3	In my opinion, the role of the teacher is to give me regular tests to evaluate my learning	3.14	0.964	50	I need the teacher to choose activities for me to learn English	3.24	0.995
13	It is the teacher's responsibility to create opportunities for me to practise	3.14	1.014	3	In my opinion, the role of the teacher is to give me regular tests to evaluate my learning	3.19	0.981
44	I think the teacher's responsibility is to decide what I should learn in English lessons	2.86	0.964	44	I think the teacher's responsibility is to decide what I should learn in English lessons	3.00	1.183
8	I need the teacher to set learning goals for me	2.67	1.065	8	I need the teacher to set learning goals for me	2.60	0.94
Valid N (listwise): 20				Valid N (listwise): 20			

As for the intervention group, the responses are presented in two columns, pre- and post-intervention, corresponding with the two occasions on which the questionnaire was administered, i.e., at the beginning and the end of the semester (Table 5.6). There is only one apparent change in the students' responses to the TR scale between pre- and post-intervention. This appears in their view about the teacher's responsibility for 'creating opportunities for practice'. The mean score of this item is only 3.14 in pre-intervention, which reflects an indifferent attitude about whether teachers are responsible for creating opportunities for students to practise English. However, as the standard deviation of this mean score is higher than one point on the Likert-type scale (i.e., $SD = 1.014$), there is a considerable dispersion in the students' opinion away from the mean value. This might have shifted the mean score away from the point it should have been. Therefore, this mean score does not necessarily reflect the actual common trend in the students' responses. As for the post-intervention results, the mean score of this item is considerably higher at 3.62, which makes this item come just behind the group of 6 items with highest mean scores. With a standard deviation of 0.669, it is safe to say that this score indicates that the post-test intervention group attribute more responsibility to teachers for creating opportunities to practise English. The reasons behind this difference will be discussed in sections 6.2.4.4 and 6.2.4.6.

5.5.3 Acceptance and desire for responsibility

5.5.3.1 A comparison between the non-intervention cohort and intervention group

Table 5.7 explores whether respondents are willing to take responsibility for several aspects of their learning. These include deciding where and how to learn, choosing materials to learn, and learning on one's own. The items in this table have been ranked in descending order by their mean scores.

Table 5.7: ADR scale (Non-intervention cohort vs. intervention group)

Non-intervention cohort (N=213)				Pre-intervention group (N=21)			
		M	SD			M	SD
55	Language learning involves a lot of self-study	4.47	0.611	55	Language learning involves a lot of self-study	4.76	0.436
41	I think teachers should give us opportunities to select what we like to learn	3.88	0.761	12	I like teachers who give us a lot of opportunities to learn on our own	4.1	0.625
47	I think I have the ability to learn English well	3.86	0.735	61	I enjoy tasks where I can learn on my own	4	0.632
61	I enjoy tasks where I can learn on my own	3.85	0.718	47	I think I have the ability to learn English well	3.95	0.59
12	I like teachers who give us a lot of opportunities to learn on our own	3.63	0.826	56	I think teachers should give us opportunities to decide where and how to learn	3.81	0.75
28	I dislike being told how I should learn	3.61	0.973	41	I think teachers should give us opportunities to select what we like to learn	3.43	0.811
56	I think teachers should give us opportunities to decide where and how to learn	3.6	0.815	6	I like to be able to choose my own materials for English classes	3.19	0.814
6	I like to be able to choose my own materials for English classes	3.51	0.905	15	I try new ways/strategies of learning English	3.33	0.966
15	I try new ways/strategies of learning English	3.44	0.747	28	I dislike being told how I should learn	3.05	0.973
Valid N (listwise): 200				Valid N (listwise): 21			

On the whole, the mean scores of responses from the cohort and intervention group are above the neutral level, which indicates respondents' positive attitude towards taking responsibility in learning. Although there are differences between the groups

in the order of items in terms of mean scores, the respondents concur that “language learning involves a lot of self-study”. However, while respondents demonstrate strong inclination towards having the opportunity to learn on their own, they seem to be less certain when it comes to making decisions by themselves. This is demonstrated by the lower mean scores of items relating to learning decisions, such as deciding where and how to learn, selecting what they like to learn, and choosing their own materials. This observation is particularly obvious in the intervention group. The mean scores of the items related to opportunities to select what to learn and choose English learning materials are below the 3.5 threshold in the intervention group (3.43 and 3.19 respectively). On the contrary, the mean scores of these items are above the 3.5 threshold in the non-intervention group (3.6 and 3.51 respectively). This difference implies that the intervention students seemed to be more reserved about taking the opportunities to select what to learn and choose learning materials than the non-intervention students.

5.5.3.2 A comparison between the intervention groups pre- and post-intervention results

The intervention students’ responses to items investigating whether they are keen on taking responsibility for several aspects of their learning pre- and post-intervention are presented in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8: ADR scale (Pre-intervention vs. Post-intervention)

Pre-intervention (N=21)				Post-intervention (N=21)			
		M	SD			M	SD
55	Language learning involves a lot of self-study	4.76	0.436	55	Language learning involves a lot of self-study	4.43	0.746
12	I like teachers who give us a lot of opportunities to learn on our own	4.1	0.625	61	I enjoy tasks where I can learn on my own	4.14	0.655
61	I enjoy tasks where I can learn on my own	4	0.632	47	I think I have the ability to learn English well	4.1	0.539
47	I think I have the ability to learn English well	3.95	0.59	15	I try new ways/strategies of learning English	3.90	0.768
56	I think teachers should give us opportunities to decide where and how to learn	3.81	0.75	12	I like teachers who give us a lot of opportunities to learn on our own	3.86	0.793
41	I think teachers should give us opportunities to select what we like to learn	3.43	0.811	6	I like to be able to choose my own materials for English classes	3.62	0.865
15	I try new ways/strategies of learning English	3.33	0.966	41	I think teachers should give us opportunities to select what we like to learn	3.45	0.686
6	I like to be able to choose my own materials for English classes	3.19	0.814	28	I dislike being told how I should learn	3.33	1.278
28	I dislike being told how I should learn	3.05	0.973	56	I think teachers should give us opportunities to decide where and how to learn	3.33	1.065
Valid N (listwise): 21				Valid N (listwise): 20			

The table above shows that these four items appear in the top five items with the highest mean scores both in pre- and post-intervention:

- Language learning involves a lot of self-study.
- I enjoy tasks where I can learn on my own.
- I like teachers who give us a lot of opportunities to learn on our own.
- I think I have the ability to learn English well.

The high mean scores of the items above indicate that the students in the intervention group are confident in their ability and prefer to have a certain degree of independence from the teacher in learning English. In terms of making decisions about learning, there are three changes in the mean score of the items between pre-

and post-intervention. The first difference is in item ‘I think teachers should give us opportunities to decide where and how to learn’. The mean score of this item is 3.81 (SD = 0.75) in pre-intervention and 3.33 (SD = 1.065) in post-intervention. While the mean score in pre-intervention indicates that students have a strong tendency towards agreement of the statement, the mean score in post-intervention, despite showing a decrease towards the neutral point, does not point to a firm conclusion because of the high standard deviation (i.e., 1.065). However, it also shows that some students have changed their minds a lot since the pre-test, so the intervention programme must have a greater effect on some than others, both positively and negatively!

The second difference in pre- and post-intervention mean scores is in the item ‘I like to be able to choose my own materials for English classes’. There is an increase in the mean score of this item, from 3.18 (SD = 0.814) in pre-intervention to 3.65 (SD = 0.865) in post-intervention. Whether this increase is statistically significant and attributable to the ILTP is a point to explore in subsequent sections (see section 5.5.6.2). Still, it can be observed that the post-intervention mean score of the item shows that the students in the intervention group show a stronger preference for being able to choose their own learning materials than the pre-intervention results.

Lastly, the item ‘I try new ways/strategies of learning English’ (item no. 15) results in an increase in the mean scores between pre- and post-intervention, from 3.33 (SD = 0.966) to 3.90 (SD = 0.768). With their relatively low standard deviations, these mean scores clearly indicate that the intervention students are more willing to experiment with new ways and strategies for learning English after the intervention.

5.5.4 Metacognitive knowledge (self and learning process)

5.5.4.1 A comparison between the non-intervention cohort and intervention group

Respondents' metacognitive knowledge about themselves as learners and about the learning process is ranked in order by the mean scores of the items and presented in Table 5.9.

Table 5.9: MKKS and MKLP scales (Non-intervention cohort vs. intervention group)

Non-intervention cohort (N=213)				Pre-intervention group (N=21)			
		M	SD			M	SD
17	MKKS: I enjoy learning English	4.33	0.698	17	MKKS: I enjoy learning English	4.57	0.676
16	MKLP: I can explain why I need English	4.3	0.675	16	MKLP: I can explain why I need English	4.52	0.602
9	MKKS: I know my strengths and weaknesses	3.99	0.739	52	MKLP: I ask for help in learning English when I need it	4	0.894
52	MKLP: I ask for help in learning English when I need it	3.78	0.779	9	MKKS: I know my strengths and weaknesses	3.95	0.74
40	MKLP: I am good at setting my own learning goals	3.52	0.765	37	MKLP: I am able to find resources for learning English on my own	3.48	0.814
43	MKLP: I am good at planning my learning	3.47	0.837	40	MKLP: I am good at setting my own learning goals	3.43	0.87
38	MKKS: I know my learning style and use it effectively	3.4	0.822	38	MKKS: I know my learning style and use it effectively	3.38	0.865
24	MKLP: I am good at measuring my progress	3.36	0.817	43	MKLP: I am good at planning my learning	3.33	0.856
37	MKLP: I am able to find resources for learning English on my own	3.31	0.919	59	MKKS: I know the best ways to learn and practise English for me	3.1	1.136
59	MKKS: I know the best ways to learn and practise English for me	3.23	0.977	24	MKLP: I am good at measuring my progress	2.9	0.944
45	MKLP: I can check my work for mistakes	2.9	0.854	23	MKKS: I am not confident about my English ability	2.67	1.155
23	MKKS: I am not confident about my English ability	2.68	1.098	45	MKLP: I can check my work for mistakes	2.48	0.814
	Valid N (listwise): 192				Valid N (listwise): 21		

It can be seen from the table above that across the two groups, there are four items that have the highest mean score, namely, I enjoy learning English (item no. 17), I can explain why I need English (item no. 16), I know my strengths and weaknesses (Item no. 9), and I ask for help when I need it (item no. 52). These items demonstrate that the respondents have a positive attitude towards learning English. They know their learning purposes and are confident about their learning ability.

The second group of items with lower mean scores, however, is directly related to the 'capacity to take responsibility' as stipulated by Holec (1981) and Little (1991). This capacity includes: setting learning goals (item no. 40), planning learning (item no. 43), measuring progress (item no. 24), and finding resources (item no. 37). Besides, there are two items denoting self-knowledge essential to learner's practising of autonomous learning. These items are 'I know my learning style and use it effectively' (item no. 38) and 'I know the best ways to learn and practise English for me' (item no. 59). These results allow us to conclude that although the students responded positively to the 'capacity to take responsibility' items, i.e., mean scores greater than 3, the fact that the level of their confidence was not very high (mean scores lower than 3.5) suggest that training can be provided to foster their ability to manage and take responsibility for their own learning.

Finally, there are only two items in this scale which have the mean scores lower than 3.0 in both groups of respondents. The first item is 'I am not confident about my English ability' (item no. 23). As this item is negatively worded, the score has been reversely coded. The negative tendency indicates that learners think positively about their English ability. The second item, 'check my work for mistakes' (item no. 45) is related to the autonomous learning process discussed above. This result implies that

the students are not confident about their ability to check their own work for mistakes. This can be because they are not trained to do this task. However, they may think this task is in the teachers' responsibility as the low mean score of this item is related to the high mean score of the item 'point out my strengths and weaknesses' in the Teacher's responsibility scale (see 5.5.2.1).

In general, the results from the previous scale and this scale allow us to observe that the respondents demonstrate their predilection for learning English. They are aware of their needs and purposes and confident in their ability to learn the language well. They also incline towards self-initiated learning activities. However, they show less certainty about their ability to make decisions and take responsibility. This is evident in the lower mean score of decision-making and autonomous-learning related items discussed above.

5.5.4.2 A comparison between the intervention groups pre- and post-intervention results

Table 5.10 exhibits pre- and post-intervention responses of the intervention students to the RFAQ items regarding metacognitive knowledge about self and the learning process.

Table 5.10: MKKS and MKLP scales (Pre-intervention vs. Post-intervention)

Pre-intervention (N=21)				Post-intervention (N=21)			
		M	SD			M	SD
17	MKKS: I enjoy learning English	4.57	0.676	17	MKKS: I enjoy learning English	4.33	0.73
16	MKLP: I can explain why I need English	4.52	0.602	16	MKLP: I can explain why I need English	4.29	0.644
52	MKLP: I ask for help in learning English when I need it	4	0.894	52	MKLP: I ask for help in learning English when I need it	4	0.632
9	MKKS: I know my strengths and weaknesses	3.95	0.74	37	MKLP: I am able to find resources for learning English on my own	3.81	0.981
37	MKLP: I am able to find resources for learning English on my own	3.48	0.814	43	MKLP: I plan my learning	3.71	0.956
40	MKLP: I can set my own learning goals	3.43	0.87	38	MKKS: I know my learning style and use it effectively	3.67	0.856
38	MKKS: I know my learning style and use it effectively	3.38	0.865	40	MKLP: I can set my own learning goals	3.67	0.73
43	MKLP: I plan my learning	3.33	0.856	9	MKKS: I know my strengths and weaknesses	3.62	1.024
59	MKKS: I know the best ways to learn and practise English for me	3.1	1.136	59	MKKS: I know the best ways to learn and practise English for me	3.38	1.071
24	MKLP: I am able to measure my progress	2.9	0.944	24	MKLP: I am able to measure my progress	3.24	0.944
23	MKKS: I am not confident about my English ability	2.67	1.155	45	MKLP: I can check my work for mistakes	2.95	0.921
45	MKLP: I can check my work for mistakes	2.48	0.814	23	MKKS: I am not confident about my English ability	2.71	1.146
Valid N (listwise): 21				Valid N (listwise): 21			

In terms of the general trend, the post-intervention results reflect a positive change in the students' self-evaluation of their metacognitive knowledge about self and the learning process. Specifically, 10 out of 14 items in post-intervention findings have

the mean score above 3.5 (i.e., the mid-point between 'neutral' and 'agree') compared with only 5 out of 14 items in pre-intervention. This trend can be argued to indicate an improvement in the students' confidence in their own ability which is reflected through the enhancement of their metacognitive knowledge about themselves as learners and about the learning process.

As for individual items, there is a decrease in the mean score of the item 'I know my strengths and weaknesses' (item no. 9) from 3.95 (SD = 0.74) pre-intervention to 3.62 (SD = 1.024) post-intervention. This effectively lowers the ranking of the item from 4th pre-intervention to 10th post-intervention. Although this could raise some concerns, the high standard deviation of the post-intervention mean score of the item renders this result fallible. Even so, the mean scores still reveal the students' strong tendency towards agreeing with the statement in the item because they are both above 3.5.

5.5.5 Metacognitive knowledge (learning context and language awareness)

Table 5.11: MKLA and MKLC scales (Pre-intervention vs. Post-intervention)

Pre-intervention (N=21)				Post-intervention (N=21)			
		M	SD			M	SD
51	MKLA: Stressing the right part of an English word is important for the correct pronunciation. e.g., banAna, not bAnana	4.76	0.436	49	MKLA: Stressing the right word in a sentence is important for the correct meaning/emphasis. E.g., "That's MY bicycle", not "That is my BICYCLE"	4.57	0.507
36	MKLC: Success in English is regarded as very important in my family	4.48	0.75	51	MKLA: Stressing the right part of an English word is important for the correct pronunciation. e.g., banAna, not bAnana	4.48	0.602
49	MKLA: Stressing the right word in a sentence is important for the correct meaning/emphasis. E.g., "That's MY bicycle", not "That is my BICYCLE"	4.48	0.68	18	MKLC: The university treats English as a very important subject	4.24	0.539
60	*MKLC: It's not cool to speak English in class	4.29	0.784	20	MKLA: Learning idioms and phrases by heart can improve my spoken English	4.19	0.68
32	MKLC: It is cool to speak English with native speakers (e.g., Americans) on the street	4.29	0.956	27	MKLA: I know some differences between spoken and written English	4.05	0.74
18	MKLC: The university treats English as a very important subject	4.29	0.717	14	MKLC: People in Vietnam who can speak English well have a better social status (e.g., they make more money; they are more educated, etc.)	4	1
20	MKLA: Learning idioms and phrases by heart can improve my spoken English	4.24	0.7	21	MKLC: There are a lot of opportunities to learn and practise English in Hochiminh city	4	0.707
21	MKLC: There are a lot of opportunities to learn and practise English in Hochiminh city	4.19	0.873	36	MKLC: Success in English is regarded as very important in my family	3.95	1.161
5	MKLA: I am aware that there are some sounds in English which do not exist in my language	4.14	0.727	60	*MKLC: It's not cool to speak English in class	3.95	1.024
27	MKLA: I know some differences between spoken and written English	3.81	0.928	32	MKLC: It is cool to speak English with native speakers (e.g., Americans) on the street	3.9	0.995
1	MKLA: I know some differences between American English and British English	3.76	0.944	5	MKLA: I am aware that there are some sounds in English which do not exist in my language	3.9	1.091
14	MKLC: People in Vietnam who can speak English well have a better social status (e.g., they make more money; they are more educated, etc.)	3.62	1.322	1	MKLA: I know some differences between American English and British English	3.81	0.981
4	MKLC: In English classes in my university, we speak a lot of English	3.57	0.926	4	MKLC: In English classes in my university, we speak a lot of English	3.38	0.973
Valid N (listwise): 21				Valid N (listwise): 21			

* These items have been reversely coded.

Table 5.11 demonstrates respondent's perception of their metacognitive knowledge about the subject, i.e., English, and the learning context. These items, which have been ranked in order by their mean scores, were only included in the longer version of RFAQ for the intervention group. Given all the mean scores are well above 3, it is plausible to conclude that the respondents in the intervention group had good awareness of the English language and the learning context in which they found themselves. The item with the lowest mean score is quite interesting: 'In English classes in my university, we speak a lot of English'. The fact that the mean score of this item drops from 3.57 to 3.38 in pre- and post-intervention respectively either signifies that they actually spoke less English in their classes in the last semester or that they were not satisfied with the amount of time and effort devoted to using English in class and thought that they should have spoken more English.

5.5.6 Statistical tests

5.5.6.1 Mann-Whitney U Non-parametric Test (cohort vs. intervention group)

As I have mentioned earlier in this chapter (see section 5.3.1), apart from being used as one of the main instruments to study the intervention group, the RFAQ was administered to the cohort in order to establish a baseline for my programme to foster learner autonomy at the University which was the research site. Therefore, it is useful to know how typical the intervention group is compared with the whole cohort at the start of the study. This allows me to make further claims about the extent to which the intervention programme has brought about changes in the intervention group.

In order to find out if the intervention group is any different from the non-intervention cohort in their responses to the RFAQ, the Mann-Whitney U non-parametric test was deployed. Because the questionnaire administered to the non-

intervention cohort is shorter than the one for the intervention group, this test was carried out on 36 items identified by the reliability analysis (see section 5.4.1) and shared by both the full-length and shortened versions of the RFAQ. The results from the test show that almost all the asymptotic significance coefficients achieved (i.e., the 2-tailed Assymp. Sig. of 31 out of 36 items; see APPENDIX S) are greater than .05; therefore, there is little significant discrepancy between the intervention group and the cohort. In other words, the intervention group is typical of the student population.

Table 5.12: Mann-Whitney U significance test (cohort vs. pre-intervention)

	Group	M	N	SD	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
ADR: I like teachers who give us a lot of opportunities to learn on our own	Cohort	3.63	211	.826	.009
	Intervention	4.10	21	.625	
	Total	3.67	232	.820	
ADR: I dislike being told how I should learn	Cohort	3.61	213	.973	.017
	Intervention	3.05	21	.973	
	Total	3.56	234	.984	
ADR: I think teachers should give us opportunities to select what we like to learn	Cohort	3.88	213	.761	.013
	Intervention	3.43	21	.811	
	Total	3.84	234	.775	
ADR: Language learning involves a lot of self-study	Cohort	4.47	212	.611	.033
	Intervention	4.76	21	.436	
	Total	4.49	233	.603	
MKLP: I am able to measure my progress	Cohort	3.36	211	.817	.020
	Intervention	2.90	21	.944	
	Total	3.31	232	.838	

Table 5.12 shows five items that have significant dissimilarity in the responses of the non-intervention cohort and the intervention group. Apparently, there are significant differences between the two groups in terms of their acceptance and desire for responsibility, namely the ADR scale. According to the Mann-Whitney U test results, the intervention group responded significantly more positively to two items: 1) ‘I like

teachers who give us a lot of opportunities to learn on our own’, and 2) ‘Language learning involves a lot of self-study’, than the cohort. However, they showed significantly less agreement with two other items: 3) ‘I dislike being told how I should learn’ and 4) ‘I think the teacher should give us opportunities to select what we like to learn’ than the cohort. Also, the intervention group were not as confident in themselves as the cohort in terms measuring their own progress.

Table 5.13: Mann-Whitney U significance test (cohort vs. post-intervention)

	Group	M	N	SD	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
TR: I need the teacher to set learning goals for me	Cohort	3.15	211	1.139	.032
	Intervention	2.60	20	.940	
	Total	3.10	231	1.132	
TR: It is the teacher’s responsibility to create opportunities for me to practice	Cohort	2.95	211	1.057	.002
	Intervention	3.62	21	.669	
	Total	3.01	232	1.044	
ADR: I think teachers should give us opportunities to select what we like to learn	Cohort	3.88	213	.761	.014
	Intervention	3.45	20	.686	
	Total	3.84	233	.763	
MKLP: I try new ways/strategies of learning English	Cohort	3.44	213	.747	.008
	Intervention	3.90	21	.768	
	Total	3.48	234	.759	
MKLP: I am able to find resources for learning English on my own	Cohort	3.31	208	.919	.030
	Intervention	3.81	21	.981	
	Total	3.36	229	.933	

The same statistical test was deployed on all items to compare the responses of the non-intervention cohort at the beginning of the semester and the post-intervention responses of the intervention group collected at the end of the semester (see Table 5.13). Although it can be argued that because the responses of the intervention group and the non-intervention cohort were collected at two different points of time, the validity of any comparison between them is questionable, I find this method

acceptable because the composition of the cohort consist of students of different years of study and thus can be considered to be representative at another point of time that is not too distant from the time data were collected.

Comparing the results of the first and the second test (Table 5.12 and Table 5.13), it can be seen that only one item appears in both of them, namely 'I think teachers should give us opportunities to select what we like to learn'. In other words, four items of significant difference in the first test have diminished to non-significance after the intervention. Also, this process has brought about four new significant differences to the intervention group in comparison with the cohort. These four items belong to two scales: 'Teachers' responsibilities' and 'Metacognitive knowledge of the learning process'. In terms of teachers' responsibilities, the intervention group clearly show more disapproval of the idea that they need the teacher to set learning goals for them. However, they responded significantly more positively than the cohort to the suggestion that it is the teacher's responsibility to create opportunities for them to practice. As for metacognitive knowledge of the learning process, the intervention group showed significantly more confidence in autonomous learning than the cohort as they were reported to be more active in trying new ways and strategies of learning English and more capable of finding resources for learning English on their own.

5.5.6.2 Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test (pre vs. post intervention)

In order to investigate if the intervention has resulted in any significant effects on students' perception of the different issues related to readiness for learner autonomy stipulated in the RFAQ, the non-parametric Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test was deployed on students' pre- and post-intervention responses to items in the

questionnaire. This statistical test suits this purpose because it allows a comparison between two sets of scores that come from the same participants to investigate any change in scores from one time point to another (Searle, 1999). The non-parametric Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test identified five items with significant difference in mean scores between the beginning and the end of the intervention. These items are displayed in Table 5.14.

Table 5.14: Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test (pre vs. post intervention)

	Mean Pre-intervention	Mean Post-intervention	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
ADR: Language learning involves a lot of self-study	4.76	4.43	.034
MKLP: I try new ways/strategies of learning English	3.33	3.90	.022
MKKS: I enjoy learning English	4.57	4.33	.025
MKLP: I can check my work for mistakes	2.48	2.95	.019
MKLC: Success in English is regarded as very important in my family	4.48	3.95	.013

Similar to the results of the Mann-Whitney U test on responses from the non-intervention cohort and the post-intervention group, the results of the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test between pre- and post-intervention indicated significant increases in the mean scores of two items related to metacognitive knowledge on the learning process. These are 1) 'I try new ways/strategies of learning English' and 2) 'I can check my work for mistakes'. In other words, it can be inferred that the intervention programme has made students more aware of language learning strategies and more confident in trying them out. Moreover, although the students in the intervention group are still unsure about their ability to check their work for mistakes (2.95), the programme has significantly raised their confidence by 0.47 points from 2.48.

There are, however, significant decreases in the mean scores of three items between pre- and post-intervention. These items are 3) 'Language learning involves a lot of self-study', 4) 'I enjoy learning English', 5) 'Success in English is regarded as very important in my family'. For the first two items, although the decrease in their mean scores are significant, the mean scores in post-intervention still indicate students' strong agreement to these statements (4.43 and 4.33 respectively). This means that students still show a high level of enjoyment in learning English and a strong agreement to the idea that language learning involves a lot of self-study. The set-back can be seen at the last item, namely 'Success in English is regarded as very important in my family'. Although a mean score of 3.95 is relatively high, the fact that it has decreased from 4.48 in pre-intervention is noticeable. Perhaps, after the intervention programme, the students have adjusted their attitudes towards learning English and no longer consider it a pressure from the family (c.f. section 6.2.4.1 on motivation for learning English).

5.6 Findings from PLAQ

Besides identifying students' readiness for autonomous English learning, I also sought to investigate teachers' and students' perspectives on learner autonomy. In order to achieve this aim, I used the PLAQ to find out what teachers and students think about the extent to which they are responsible for English teaching/learning activities both in and outside the classroom. The questionnaire also explored how teachers evaluate students' abilities to carry out learning activities related to autonomous learning and how students rate their own ability in this matter. This questionnaire was administered in two slightly different versions; one for students and the other for teachers (see section 3.10.2.3). This section will present findings from the two versions of PLAQ.

5.6.1 Teachers' responsibility

Table 5.15 exhibits teachers' responsibility from the perspective of students and teachers. These responses are organised into 2 columns, one for teachers and one for students. The items in each group are arranged in descending order by their mean scores. These mean scores were computed from the respondents' responses measured by a five-level Likert scale (i.e., 1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Some, 4 = Mainly, 5 = Completely).

Table 5.15: Teachers' responsibility

Teachers (N=65)				Students (N=91)			
		M	SD			M	SD
8	choosing what activities to learn English in the lessons	4.42	0.583	10	evaluating students' learning	4.47	0.621
10	evaluating students' learning	4.34	0.644	7	deciding what should be learned in English lessons	4.21	0.753
5	identifying students' weaknesses in English	4.28	0.6	5	identifying students' weaknesses in English	4.19	0.777
7	deciding what should be learned in English lessons	4.26	0.668	3	students' interest in learning English	4.19	0.759
6	setting learning goals for students for their English course	4.14	0.768	8	choosing what activities to learn English in the lessons	4.1	0.761
9	deciding how long to spend on each activity in class	4.12	0.696	6	setting learning goals for students for their English course	4.03	0.752
3	students' interest in learning English	3.88	0.696	1	Students' progress during lessons	3.94	0.729
1	students' progress during lessons	3.83	0.68	9	deciding how long to spend on each activity in class	3.91	0.788
4	students' working harder	3.6	0.746	4	Students' working harder	3.52	0.808
11	deciding what students learn outside class	3.11	0.793	11	deciding what students learn outside class	3.2	0.922
2	students' progress outside class	2.92	0.872	2	students' progress outside class	3.16	0.815
Valid N (listwise): 64				Valid N (listwise): 84			

If results from the teachers' responsibility scale of the RFAQ show us that students hold quite high expectation for teachers' responsibility in the English language class (see Table 5.6), the data collected by the PLAQ confirm this observation. Table 5.15 shows that both teachers and students think that teachers have main responsibility in

making decisions about or performing teaching/learning activities. Eight out of eleven items have a mean score greater than 3.5 and six of them greater than 4, with 3 being 'Some' and 4 being 'Mainly'. However, while the student respondents indicate that teachers should have at least 'some' responsibility in all items with their mean score no less than 3, the teacher respondents only accept limited responsibility for 'students' progress outside class', with a mean score of 2.92 (see Table 5.15).

From these findings, two conclusions can be made. First, the English classrooms in the University are still very much teacher-controlled. Second, students are quite dependent on their teachers for learning activities and decisions in the English language class. However, it is worth reminding that the respondents of the PLAQ are first year students who had just left high-school in which the teacher-controlled teaching method is dominant.

5.6.2 Students' responsibility

Table 5.16 exhibits students' responsibility from the perspective of students and teachers. These responses are organised into 2 columns, one for teachers and one for students. Similar to Table 5.15, the items in each group in Table 5.16 are arranged in descending order by their mean scores.

Table 5.16: Students' responsibility

Teachers (N=65)				Students (N=91)			
		M	SD			M	SD
4	students' working harder	4.24	0.712	6	setting learning goals for students for their English course	4.10	0.775
11	deciding what students learn outside class	4.16	0.761	11	deciding what students learn outside class	4.04	0.893
2	students' progress outside class	4.06	0.906	3	students' interest in learning English	4.02	0.699
6	setting learning goals for students for their English course	3.98	0.845	1	students' progress during lessons	3.97	0.73
1	students' progress during lessons	3.97	0.642	2	students' progress outside class	3.89	0.8
3	students' interest in learning English	3.95	0.785	4	students' working harder	3.87	0.859
5	identifying students' weaknesses in English	3.64	0.804	5	identifying students' weaknesses in English	3.72	0.808
7	deciding what should be learned in English lessons	3.58	0.905	8	choosing what activities to learn English in the lessons	3.53	0.927
10	evaluating students' learning	3.39	0.953	10	evaluating students' learning	3.45	1.036
8	choosing what activities to learn English in the lessons	3.31	1.097	9	deciding how long to spend on each activity in class	3.38	0.911
9	deciding how long to spend on each activity in class	2.98	1.024	7	deciding what should be learned in English lessons	3.37	0.905
Valid N (listwise): 62				Valid N (listwise): 85			

Concerning the extent to which students are thought to be responsible for the English language classroom activities and decisions, the teacher and student respondents' perspectives are only partially matched at the top end of the mean score spectrum. From the teachers' viewpoint, students are mainly responsible for working harder and making decisions related to learning outside class. The students, while agreeing on their major part in deciding what to learn outside class, are also willing to take main responsibility in setting learning goals and stimulating their own interest in learning. This is an encouraging signal in terms of learner autonomy (see Table 5.16).

If the teacher and student respondents differ in their opinions about activities that are in the students' main responsibility, they seem to share the view on what the students

should have only some responsibility for. This result is demonstrated at the low end of the mean score spectrum with activities and decisions, such as ‘choosing activities to learn’, ‘deciding how long to spend on an activity’, ‘evaluating students’ learning’ obtaining a mean score lower than 3.58. It can be easily noticed that these classroom management decisions and activities are corresponding with those at the high mean score spectrum in Table 5.15, which is about teachers’ responsibility. In other words, this result confirms the teacher-controlled practice at the university where teachers take main responsibility in making classroom decisions. However, although these decisions are at the low end of the mean score spectrum of students’ responsibility, the fact that these mean scores range from 3.31 to 3.58, except for one item, allows us to conclude that both teachers and students agree that students should have some say in these decisions.

The fact that the item ‘deciding how long to spend on each activity in class’ has a mean score of 2.98 from the teachers’ perspective is quite interesting. It reflects classroom reality where students cannot be the ones who decide when to stop an activity and move on to another. A possible reason for this is because every teacher has a syllabus to follow and they have to make sure everything in the syllabus is covered in the given amount of classroom hours. They are responsible for their students’ performance in the final exams which are designed based on the syllabus and the course book. Also, this may stem from the Confucian cultural tradition which is in favour of an authoritarian view of the roles of the teachers. This tradition results in a learning environment in which a good, experienced teacher must be able to control the content and duration of classroom activities. The consequent learning environment also has a domino effect as teachers with previous learning experiences in such an environment are prone to adopt this view in their teaching style.

5.6.3 Students' ability

This section in the PLAQ aims to explore teachers and students' evaluation of the students' ability to perform several key learning decisions and activities that are essential to autonomous learning. This also helps explain possible reasons behind the differences between teachers' and students' perspectives on the extent to which teachers and students are responsible for those decisions and activities.

Table 5.17: Students' ability

Teachers (N=65)				Students (N=91)			
		M	SD			M	SD
19	evaluate the course	3.17	0.827	20	identify their weaknesses in English	3.54	0.97
20	identify their weaknesses in English	3.08	0.914	24	set their learning goals	3.47	0.886
18	evaluate their learning	2.97	0.901	19	evaluate the course	3.45	0.793
14	choose learning objectives in class	2.95	0.906	14	choose learning objectives in class	3.42	0.817
22	decide how long to spend on each activity in class	2.92	0.816	15	choose learning objectives outside class	3.32	0.88
12	choose learning activities in class	2.88	0.845	13	choose learning activities outside class	3.3	0.837
24	set their learning goals	2.82	0.917	18	evaluate their learning	3.19	0.788
16	choose learning materials in class	2.77	0.948	21	decide what they should learn next in your English lessons	3.1	0.79
17	choose learning materials outside class	2.74	0.957	22	decide how long to spend on each activity in class	3.09	0.843
13	choose learning activities outside class	2.74	0.853	12	choose learning activities in class	3.09	0.694
15	choose learning objectives outside class	2.73	0.877	17	choose learning materials outside class	3.05	0.959
23	plan their learning	2.71	0.914	16	choose learning materials in class	2.97	0.823
21	decide what they should learn next in your English lessons	2.66	0.889	23	plan their learning	2.89	0.875
	Valid N (listwise): 60				Valid N (listwise): 90		

Table 5.17 displays a sharp contrast between the teachers and students in their evaluation of students' ability. The teacher respondents seem to be quite critical of their students' ability to perform autonomous learning activities. In a 5-point scale (1

= very poor, 2 = poor, 3 = ok, 4 = good, 5 = very good), the teacher respondents only rated students' ability to evaluate the course and identify their weaknesses as OK, at 3.17 and 3.08 respectively. The remaining items, 11 out of 13, were rated below 3. On the contrary, the student respondents were quite confident about their ability with 11 out of 13 items having a mean score over 3, ranging from 3.05 to 3.54. The students only considered themselves to be not very good at choosing learning materials in class and planning their learning. In the next section, I shall discuss the difference between the teacher and student respondents in their mean scores of each item by using results of statistical tests.

5.6.4 Statistical tests

5.6.4.1 A comparison between students' and teachers' perspectives on responsibilities and abilities

The non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test was deployed to examine whether there are any significant discrepancies between the teachers and students' responses to items in the PLAQ. In terms of responsibility, the test results reveal four significant differences in the teachers' and students' perspectives. Two of these are about teachers' responsibility and the other two are about students' responsibility (see Table 5.18).

Table 5.18: Group Statistics

	Group	N	M	SD	Asymp. Sig. (2- tailed)	Sig
T-Res students' interest in learning English	Teacher	65	3.88	.696	.008	P<0.01
	Student	91	4.19	.759		
S-Res students' working harder	Teacher	63	4.24	.712	.009	P<0.01
	Student	91	3.87	.859		
T-Res choosing what activities to learn English in the lessons	Teacher	65	4.42	.583	.010	P<0.01
	Student	91	4.10	.761		
S-Res deciding how long to spend on each activity in class	Teacher	63	2.98	1.02 4	.014	P<0.05
	Student	89	3.38	.911		
S-Ablt choose learning activities outside class	Teacher	65	2.74	.853	.000	P<0.001
	Student	91	3.30	.837		
S-Ablt choose learning objectives in class	Teacher	63	2.95	.906	.001	P<0.001
	Student	91	3.42	.817		
S-Ablt choose learning objectives outside class	Teacher	64	2.73	.877	.000	P<0.001
	Student	91	3.32	.880		
S-Ablt choose learning materials outside class	Teacher	65	2.74	.957	.031	P<0.05
	Student	91	3.05	.959		
S-Ablt evaluate the course	Teacher	64	3.17	.827	.039	P<0.05
	Student	91	3.45	.793		
S-Ablt identify their weaknesses in English	Teacher	64	3.08	.914	.005	P<0.01
	Student	91	3.54	.970		
S-Ablt decide what they should learn next in your English lessons	Teacher	65	2.66	.889	.001	P<0.001
	Student	91	3.10	.790		
S-Ablt set their learning goals	Teacher	65	2.82	.917	.000	P<0.001
	Student	91	3.47	.886		

As for teachers' responsibility, the teacher respondents showed reluctance to agree that they are mainly responsible for students' interest in learning English (M = 3.88). On the contrary, the student respondents saw the teachers as being mainly responsible for this (M = 4.19). Although there was a significant difference between the teachers and students' perspectives (M = 4.42 and 4.10 respectively), both groups of

respondents agreed that the teachers are mainly responsible for choosing activities for the students to learn English in the lessons.

Concerning students' responsibility, there are two significant discrepancies in the two groups' perspectives. First, the teachers believe that students have main responsibility in working harder (4.24). By contrast, while inclining to see this as their main responsibility, the mean score of the students' responses is significantly lower than that of the teachers, at only 3.87. The second difference lies in the two groups' perspectives on students' responsibility in deciding how long to spend on each activity in class. While the teachers confined students' involvement in this to less than 'some responsibility' (2.98), the students appeared to be willing to have more say on this matter (3.38).

If there are only a few differences between the teacher and student respondents about responsibility, their views on students' ability to take responsibility for learning decisions and activities noticeably conflict with each other. Among eight items in which there are conflicting views, the teacher consistently rated students' ability at less than 3 (i.e., OK) in six items while the students saw themselves better than that with all mean scores greater than 3. In the two cases where the teachers rated their students' ability above 3, their mean scores still fell short of those that the students gave themselves. Therefore, it can be inferred from these eight items that the teacher respondents did not highly regard their students' ability to take responsibility for both in class and outside class learning, especially both in general learning decisions relating to learner autonomy, such as setting learning goals, choosing learning materials, and specific learning tasks, such as choosing learning objectives, choosing learning activities, and deciding what to learn.

5.6.4.2 An exploration of students' and teachers' allocation of responsibilities

In order to determine whether the respondents to the PLAQ (i.e., teachers and students) allocated different levels of responsibility to their own group and to the other, the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test was deployed on teachers' and students' views on areas responsibility in language learning. The test results are presented in Table 5.19 and Table 5.20.

Table 5.19: Students' perspective on the allocation of responsibility

	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Sig.
S-Res Students' progress in class T-Res Students' progress in class	-.188	.851	
S-Res Students' progress outside class T-Res Students' progress outside class	-4.880	.000	P<0.001
S-Res Students' interest in learning English T-Res Students' interest in learning English	-1.651	.099	
S-Res Students' working harder T-Res Students' working harder	-3.114	.002	P<0.005
S-Res Identifying students' weaknesses in English T-Res Identifying students' weaknesses in English	-3.698	.000	P<0.001
S-Res Setting learning goals for students for their English course T-Res Setting learning goals for students for their English course	-.892	.372	
S-Res Deciding what should be learned in English lessons T-Res Deciding what should be learned in English lessons	-6.061	.000	P<0.001
S-Res Choosing what activities to learn English in the lessons T-Res Choosing what activities to learn English in the lessons	-4.668	.000	P<0.001
S-Res Deciding how long to spend on each activity in class T-Res Deciding how long to spend on each activity in class	-3.862	.000	P<0.001
S-Res Evaluating students' learning T-Res Evaluating students' learning	-6.305	.000	P<0.001
S-Res Deciding what students learn outside class T-Res Deciding what students learn outside class	-5.215	.000	P<0.001

Table 5.20: Teachers' perspective on the allocation of responsibility

	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Sig.
S-Res Students' progress in class T-Res Students' progress in class	-1.377	.168	
S-Res Students' progress outside class T-Res Students' progress outside class	-5.484	.000	P<0.001
S-Res Students' interest in learning English T-Res Students' interest in learning English	-.494	.621	
S-Res Students' working harder T-Res Students' working harder	-4.466	.000	P<0.001
S-Res Identifying students' weaknesses in English T-Res Identifying students' weaknesses in English	-4.291	.000	P<0.001
S-Res Setting learning goals for students for their English course T-Res Setting learning goals for students for their English course	-.699	.484	
S-Res Deciding what should be learned in English lessons T-Res Deciding what should be learned in English lessons	-3.830	.000	P<0.001
S-Res Choosing what activities to learn English in the lessons T-Res Choosing what activities to learn English in the lessons	-5.372	.000	P<0.001
S-Res Deciding how long to spend on each activity in class T-Res Deciding how long to spend on each activity in class	-5.231	.000	P<0.001
S-Res Evaluating students' learning T-Res Evaluating students' learning	-5.031	.000	P<0.001
S-Res Deciding what students learn outside class T-Res Deciding what students learn outside class	-5.290	.000	P<0.001

The results shown in Table 5.19 indicate that there is significant difference in the students' allocation of their own and teachers' responsibility for eight areas ($P < 0.001$ or $P < 0.005$). In other words, by assigning a significantly different level of responsibility for these areas of language learning to themselves and to teachers, the students believed that they could have more responsibility for certain items and less responsibility for others. Similarly, Table 5.20, which explores teachers' responses, identifies eight areas which were allocated with significantly different levels of

responsibility of teachers and students ($P < 0.001$). Interestingly, the eight areas with significant difference in Table 5.20 are the same as those in Table 5.19. In summary, both the students and teachers shared the view that each group had significantly different levels of responsibility for eight areas of language learning. This is reflected in Table 5.21 and Table 5.22 below.

Table 5.21: Responsibility as allocated by students

Areas of language learning	S	T
Deciding what students learn outside class	4.04	3.2
Students' progress outside class	3.89	3.16
Students' working harder	3.87	3.52
Identifying students' weaknesses in English	3.72	4.19
Choosing what activities to learn English in the lessons	3.53	4.1
Evaluating students' learning	3.45	4.47
Deciding how long to spend on each activity in class	3.38	3.91
Deciding what should be learned in English lessons	3.37	4.21

Table 5.22: Responsibility as allocated by teachers

Areas of language learning	T	S
Choosing what activities to learn English in the lessons	4.42	3.31
Evaluating students' learning	4.34	3.39
Identifying students' weaknesses in English	4.28	3.64
Deciding what should be learned in English lessons	4.26	3.58
Deciding how long to spend on each activity in class	4.12	2.98
Students' working harder	3.6	4.24
Deciding what students learn outside class	3.11	4.16
Students' progress outside class	2.92	4.06

Table 5.21 shows that the students believed they had significantly more responsibility than teachers for deciding what they want to learn outside class, their progress outside class, and their effort in learning (i.e., working harder). In fact, students accepted

main responsibility in these areas. They, however, suggested that teachers had significantly more responsibility than them for identifying their weaknesses, choosing activities for them to learn, evaluating their learning, deciding how long to spend on activities in class, and deciding what should be learned. These areas are also where teachers considered themselves to have the main responsibility, as displayed in Table 5.22. In other words, both students and teachers concurred that teachers had main responsibility in making in-class decisions related to the content of the lesson, time allocation, and assessment of students' learning. The students' responsibility, in both the students' and teachers' views, was limited to making greater effort in learning in class as well as outside class.

The findings of this section unveil the allocation of responsibility in language learning at the university as commonly perceived by the students and teachers. From the discussion above, it can be seen that the language classroom is heavily controlled by teachers, a reality assumed by both teachers and students. This reality poses a considerable challenge to the promotion of learner autonomy in the language classroom. Given the current perceptions of the allocation of responsibility in the classroom, it is expected that a long-term approach is necessary for teachers to give up their control and for students to be ready to take greater responsibility for learning. This issue will be taken into account in later discussions of teachers' and students' perceptions of learner autonomy reflected in qualitative data (i.e., CHAPTER 6 and CHAPTER 7).

5.6.5 Teachers' perspectives on promoting learner autonomy

Besides investigating the teachers' perceptions of their roles and of the students', the PLAQ for teachers included 4 extra questions to explore their view on the promotion

of learner autonomy in the classroom and their approaches to doing so. Table 5.23 below displays teachers' responses to these questions.

Table 5.23: Teachers' view on promoting learner autonomy

Item	Number of teachers (N=65)	Percentage
23. Do you regard learner autonomy as a goal of teaching?		
a) Yes	59	91%
b) No	2	3%
c) I've never thought about that	2	3%
No answer	2	3%
24. How important do you think learner autonomy is to effective language learning?		
a) Not important at all	2	3%
b) Important	27	42%
c) Extremely important	34	52%
No answer	2	3%

Table 5.23 shows that the vast majority of teachers (91%) regarded learner autonomy as a goal of teaching (item 23). The percentage of teachers who did not consider learner autonomy as a teaching goal and who never thought about including learner autonomy in their teaching goals was 3% in each option. This finding suggests that most teachers were aware of learner autonomy and considered it to be a goal in their teaching. In addition, 42% of the teachers thought that learner autonomy is important to effective language learning and 52% believed this to be extremely important. Similar to the first question, 3% of the questioned teachers dismissed the importance of learner autonomy in effective language learning. The teachers' responses to question 24 indicate that the vast majority of teachers agreed that learner autonomy plays an important role in enhancing the effectiveness of language learning.

In addition to exploring the teachers' perceptions of the importance of learner autonomy in language learning, the PLAQ identifies what activities they use to encourage students to learn autonomously. These activities are classified into teaching and learning activities and are elicited by two questions:

25. Please list any teaching activities you use to encourage students to learn autonomously.

26. Please list any learning activities you recommend to students to encourage them to learn autonomously.

The activities suggested by the teachers are presented in Table 5.24 and Table 5.25 below. However, out of 65 teachers only 55 answered item 25 and 44 answered 26.

Table 5.24: Teaching activities for autonomous learning (N=55)

Types of activity	NoM	Number of activities	Examples
Promote interaction and cooperation among students	80	17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use interactive activities: group presentation, peer assessment, peer feedback, pair/group work, oral presentation, debating, brainstorming, peer editing, project work, role-play. - Ask students to design and issue newsletters, perform in class with a given topic, set up class email for discussion, talk about daily activities, summarise what they have read, and share learning experience with peers. - Use games for learning: crosswords, songs, competition.
Encourage self-study, self-exploration	10	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ask students to give individual presentation/talk on certain topics - Give students home assignments - Give students extensive reading activities as homework - Ask students to listen to news at home and report in class
Increase students' control	7	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Let students raise questions and discuss what they have prepared - Allow students to suggest activities - Encourage students to ask questions and make suggestions - Encourage syllabus negotiation

Table 5.24: Teaching activities for autonomous learning (Cont.)

Enhance students' knowledge about learning strategies	6	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Get students to talk or write about topics like: 'What makes a successful language learner?' - Discuss 'How to' topics - Learn vocabulary by observing their environment - Talk about how to improve listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills - Instruct learning strategies
Increase teachers' input	6	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Remind students of the importance of autonomous learning. - Give students guiding questions to prepare lessons in advance. - Review lessons to allow students to raise questions
Help students develop learning management skills	5	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Point out the objectives and criteria of marking to students before any tasks. - Encourage and guide students to set goals, plan and study themselves according to their weaknesses and needs - Help students identify and improve weaknesses - Negotiate learning goals with students - Help students set goals for each task
Encourage students' reflection	5	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Give students writing assignment for reflection - Ask student to write learning diary - Ask learners to complete the learner's autonomy questionnaire at the beginning and the end of the class so that they can 'fix themselves' during the course
Give feedback on students' performance	3	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Let students know the marks they get from their performance and participation - Vote studious learners of the day - Give feedback and make students aware of their progress
Promote the application of language	3	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ask open questions related to real-life situations - Have students apply language in real-life situation, real topics
Increase teachers' monitoring	2	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Check students' homework regularly - Ask students regularly about self-study activities
Take account of students' needs	3	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design personalised activities (with focus on grammar, vocabulary, etc. depending on students' needs) - Choose activities that students like (listen to music, talk to friends, content in textbook)
Encourage self-assessment	2	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ask students to use self-assessment sheet
Promote student-teacher dialogue	1	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourage student-teacher discussion so students can raise their learning problems

Table 5.24 displays teaching activities that the teacher respondents reported they used to encourage students to learn autonomously. From the table, it can be seen that the most mentioned type of activities used to promote autonomous learning are activities that promote interaction and cooperation among students (80 out of 133 mentions). In other words, the teachers believed that by giving students tasks that allow them to work together and exchange ideas with each other, they had created an autonomous learning environment. The second most mentioned type of activities (10 out of 133 mentions) is self-study or self-exploration activities. These activities require students to work on their own to fulfil the learning tasks, such as doing extensive reading, making presentation, and listening to news in English.

Table 5.24 also exhibits teaching activities that are explicitly related to the need to provide students with metacognitive knowledge about language learning. These activities aim at enhancing students' knowledge about learning strategies, helping them develop learning management skills, and encouraging students' reflection and self-assessment. These activities could be argued to be more relevant to promoting learner autonomy than the two most mention types of activities mentioned above because they seek to develop students' ability to take charge of their own learning. In addition, the teacher respondents also reported that they used activities that encourage students to take greater control of their learning, enhance the application of language, and promote teacher-student dialogue. However, compared with the two most mentioned types of activities, these autonomy-related teaching activities only accounted for 38 out of 133 mentions. In other words, the teachers tend to think that pro-autonomy teaching activities are those that allow students to work independently of the teacher instead of seeking to develop students' capacity by enhancing their metacognitive knowledge or giving them more control of the learning process.

Table 5.25: Learning activities for autonomous learning (N=44)

Types of activity	NoM	Number of activities	Examples
Encourage self-study, self-exploration	48	17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ask students to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ use online lessons/resources ▪ read books/articles from library or on the internet ▪ prepare for lessons in advance ▪ access to online source ▪ watch movies, listen to music in English ▪ read in English ▪ visit self-access learning centres ▪ watch and read news related to business ▪ practise pronunciation daily using websites ▪ work on Moodle (web resource for virtual learning environment) ▪ read book and write a review or journal and submit ▪ read books or materials related to the course - Give students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ tasks for seeking information on the internet ▪ extensive reading ▪ assignments ▪ writing assignments - Provide students some interesting books to read
Promote interaction and cooperation among students	37	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use interactive activities: pair/group work, peer feedback (outside class), presentation, group learning - Ask students to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ share ideas freely ▪ talk to room-mate/classmate or chat with foreigners in English ▪ conduct a survey ▪ do a mini project ▪ design a communication game for class activity ▪ find a partner in learning ▪ watch movies and discuss in class ▪ create an online forum ▪ go to English speaking clubs ▪ use outdoor activities in learning

Table 5.25: Learning activities for autonomous learning (Cont.)

Help students develop learning management skills	7	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enable students to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ find out about their strong and weak points in learning and decide upon needs or objectives ▪ set up a plan to achieve their goals ▪ stick with the plan, be hard-working and self-motivated ▪ ask for help when needed and adjust the plan ▪ keep regular schedule for learning
Encourage students' reflection	4	1	- Ask students to write journals
Encourage self-assessment	1	1	- Ask students to record their voice and do self-evaluation
Enhance students' knowledge about learning strategies	2	1	- Help students recognise learning strategies
Promote student-teacher dialogue	1	1	- Ask students to write email to instructor in English
Promote the application of language	1	1	- Use case studies: Students use their own experience to solve problems
Increase teachers' input	1	1	- Inspire students to teach themselves

Table 5.25 summarises the learning activities that teachers recommended to their students to encourage them to learn autonomously. Similar to the pro-autonomy teaching activities presented in Table 5.24, most learning activities recommended by the teachers focus on providing tasks for students to work on their own. This is reflected in the dominating number of mentions related to activities that encourage self-study and self-exploration (48 out of 102) and promote interaction and cooperation among students (37 out of 102). This also means that pro-autonomy learning activities that aim to develop students' capacity to take greater responsibility for their own learning only have a modest number of mentions. These findings will be discussed further in Chapter 6 in relation to qualitative data from teacher interviews.

5.7 Conclusion

In previous sections, I have presented some statistics based on data collected using the RFAQ and PLAQ. These questionnaires have proved to be useful instruments for eliciting students' and teachers' perceptions of various aspect of learner autonomy in English language teaching through their responses. First, the RFAQ has allowed me to develop a provisional understanding of how ready the students are for learner autonomy by looking into their expectation of teachers' responsibility, their desire and acceptance of responsibility, and their metacognitive knowledge. It has also served as a point of reference so that I can make comparisons between the intervention group and the cohort and between pre- and post-intervention. Secondly, the PLAQ has afforded me more insights into the extent to which teachers and students regard their responsibility in English learning decisions and activities in and outside the classroom. This questionnaire also helped reveal how students' ability to take control of their learning is evaluated by the teachers and the students themselves.

5.7.1 General perceptions of the responsibilities of teachers and students in English language teaching and learning

Findings of the RFAQ and PLAQ reveal that the English language classrooms at the University are heavily controlled by teachers. Unfortunately, this reality is accepted by both teachers and students. They both agree that teachers have main responsibility for making most decisions related to in-class learning. Specifically, the results of statistical tests confirm that teachers and students concur that teachers are responsible for in-class decisions about the content of the lesson, time allocation, and assessment of students' learning. By contrast, the students' responsibilities are limited to making greater effort in learning, both in and outside class. These findings indicate that teachers hold an authoritarian view of language teaching, while students seem to be

dependent to teachers in learning. From the teachers' point of view, students are mainly responsible for working harder and making decisions concerning self-study outside class. As for in-class decisions discussed above, both teachers and students agree that students should only take some responsibility.

By placing teachers' and students' viewpoints into direct comparison, data from PLAQ have helped to highlight two noticeable mismatches between the students' and teachers' perceptions of responsibilities in language learning. Firstly, there is a statistically significant difference between the students' and teachers' views concerning who has the main responsibility for students' interest in learning. While the students see that both teachers and students have the main responsibility, the teachers are rather reluctant to accept 'students' interest in learning' as their main responsibility. Secondly, the teachers' and students' perspectives on students' responsibility in deciding how long to spend on an in-class learning activity are significantly different from each other. Whereas the teachers recommend only less than 'some responsibility' (i.e., 2.98), the students expect to be given significantly more responsibility for this matter (i.e., 3.38).

While the PLAQ provides us with a detailed picture from differing perspectives as it incorporates teachers' and students' views on various aspects in promoting learner autonomy, the RFAQ allows us to focus solely on students' perceptions to evaluate how ready they are for autonomous language learning. As for the students' perceptions of teachers' responsibility, findings of the RFAQ indicate that students expect teachers to take responsibility for a considerable number of classroom decisions and activities. This number is even higher for the group of intervention students. While indicating that students highly value the teachers' presence in English

language learning, this result highlights the level of dependence of the students on the teachers in this process. A closer examination of the items with the highest mean scores in the 'Teachers' responsibility' scale reveals that students express a strong desire to know about the learning process and be informed about their learning performance. In addition, it is also found that students attribute a major part of their progress in English language learning to the teachers' inputs as they want their teachers to enhance their interest in learning, provide information and help them make progress. Students can be said to have a positive attitude towards studying in a traditional teacher-controlled classroom where the teacher's job is to make their students work hard using the old-fashioned grammar-translation methods and controlling all activities both inside and outside the classroom. However, they seem to prefer teachers to play the role of a guide or a facilitator.

5.7.2 Students' characteristics in relation to learner autonomy

The results of the RFAQ indicate that students have a positive attitude towards taking responsibility for learning. This is reflected in the fact that the mean scores of all items in the 'Acceptance and desire for responsibility' scale are above the neutral level ($M > 3$). However, the students seem to be less certain about whether they want to make learning decisions by themselves, such as deciding where and how to learn and choosing their own materials. This observation is particularly true with the intervention students who appear to be more reserved about taking the opportunities to select what to learn and choosing learning materials than the non-intervention students.

The results of the RFAQ discussed above are supported by the findings of the PLAQ. In general, the students are confident about their ability to take greater responsibility

for making learning decisions, although they admit that they are not very good at choosing learning materials in class and plan their learning. The students' confidence in their own ability is not shared by their teachers, however. The PLAQ reveals that teachers are quite critical of their students' ability to perform autonomous learning activities. This is reflected by the low scores given by the teachers for items related to students' ability in making decisions concerning learning goals, learning materials, and learning activities.

In terms of metacognitive knowledge about language learning, the students demonstrate a positive attitude towards learning English. They know their learning purposes and are confident about their learning ability. Findings from the RFAQ also confirm that the students responded positively to items related to the 'capacity to take responsibility' (Holec, 1981). However, as the mean scores of these items are only in the bottom half of the list, it is suggested that learner training can be provided to help students develop the capacity for taking greater responsibility for learning.

5.7.3 Students' learning habits

It has been pointed out by the findings of the RFAQ that the most popular sources of language input among the students are audio-visual media, such as English-speaking TV programmes and music. Social interactions such as discussing learning with friends and teachers, speaking and writing to others in English are less popular sources of English input. It has also found that few students have the habit of using metacognitive strategies to manage their learning. These findings highlight the need to develop the students' ability to manage their learning which effectively enhances their capacity for greater autonomy. It is also necessary to encourage students to

communicate with their teacher to improve learning ability and take a more active role in the classroom.

5.7.4 Teachers' perceptions of promoting learner autonomy

The teachers' perceptions of promoting learner autonomy will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6 in relation to their conception of learner autonomy provided by the quantitative data presented in this chapter. Data collected by the PLAQ reveal that the majority of the surveyed teachers agree that learner autonomy is an important goal of English language teaching as they believe that learner autonomy is important to effective language learning.

As for how to promote learner autonomy in language teaching, most teachers believe pro-autonomy teaching activities mean allowing students to work independently of the teacher. Only a modest number of opinions mention the need to develop students' metacognitive knowledge and give them more control of the learning process. Most opinions are in favour of giving students tasks that allow them to work and exchange ideas in groups, which is believed to be a way to create an autonomous learning environment.

CHAPTER 6. PHASE TWO: QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings from the analysis of data collected through teacher and student interviews during the intervention programme. These qualitative data offer rich information which enables in-depth understanding of the students' and teachers' perceptions of learner autonomy and its promotion in the context of Vietnamese tertiary education. The chapter is divided into two main parts: the discussion of students' and teachers' perceptions of learner autonomy in English language learning and teaching. In each of these parts, I shall also describe how collected data were managed and analysed. The chapter concludes by collating the students' and teachers' perspectives to identify the underlying themes between them. These themes will be used in Chapter 8 to answer the research questions.

6.2 Students' perceptions

In order to investigate students' perceptions of learner autonomy, I organised focus groups in which students were invited to talk about their learning experiences and expectations. By asking the students to provide comments on the findings of the RFAQ, I encouraged students to express their views on the role of the students and teachers in the language classroom, their understandings about learner autonomy, and their opinions about whether their learning environment supported the development of learner autonomy. These focus groups obtained qualitative data to compliment the quantitative data collected by the RFAQ and elucidated findings from the questionnaire. Besides, as the focus groups took place four weeks into the intervention programme (see Table 3.6), I also examined whether the ILTP had

started to have any influences on the intervention students' perceptions of learner autonomy.

Students were asked to volunteer to attend these focus groups in the RFAQ. Among those who stated that they would like to join further discussion groups, 18 students accepted my invitation to the focus groups. There were three separate focus groups. Group 1 (FG 1) and 2 (FG 2), with eight and six students respectively, comprised students in the intervention class. Group 3 (FG 3) had four non-intervention students. The focus groups were conducted in Vietnamese to create a relaxing atmosphere and allow students to talk freely about their learning experiences and express their beliefs and attitudes towards learner autonomy, with which they might not be necessarily familiar. This choice of language allowed the students to share their understanding about autonomous learning using their own vocabulary.

6.2.1 Data management and coding

The focus groups were audio and video recorded with the consent of all participants. After each focus group, I watched the video recordings and transcribed them using Microsoft Word. Additionally, I listened to the voice recordings every now and then to ensure that I did not mishear any details. During this process, the text files produced were formatted in order to prepare for the use of qualitative data analysis software.

To ensure confidentiality, the identity of the focus group participants was coded at this stage. Each code consists of the number of the focus group, a pseudonym for the participant and the number of the questions which were listed in the schedule. A sample code is "Focus group 1 – Thien – Q3", which indicates that the data is from a student who is referred to as 'Thien'. She attended Focus group 1 and this piece of

218

data is her response to question three in the transcription. The textual data with coded participant information were then imported to Nvivo, a computer application dedicated to assisting qualitative researchers in handling rich data.

6.2.2 Data analysis

In order to bring to the surface the nuances and meanings in the information provided by the participants, make sense of their perceptions and identify their attitudes and beliefs, I followed five steps in data analysis.

- First, I read each transcript and highlighted any details that attracted my attention. Using Nvivo, I categorised these interesting topics into free nodes. In this stage I did not refer to my research questions because I hoped this could allow me to find out interesting, unexpected information which could help me have a better-informed understanding of the students' attitudes and beliefs in learning English.
- Then, I tried to organise these free nodes into tree nodes. This way of organising data allowed me to create a hierarchical system that reflected the complex relationships within the data I had.
- After developing a system of nodes, I went through the transcripts again to identify more occasions where the topics contained in the nodes were discussed.
- After that, I reviewed the research questions and went through the transcripts again to see if I could pinpoint any more information that was directly related to my research questions.
- Finally, I reviewed and rearranged the system of nodes in Nvivo until I was satisfied that it provided me with a good understanding of the data and

facilitated my purpose, which was to answer the research questions (see APPENDIX T).

After data analysis, the texts that had been extracted in Nvivo nodes were then translated from Vietnamese to English for data presentation and discussion.

6.2.3 Overview of emerging themes

After five stages of analysis and exploring the data with Nvivo, I found seven emerging themes, which are presented in the table below.

Table 6.1: Emerging themes from student focus groups (N=18)

	Theme	Number of mentions
1	Perceptions of teachers' responsibilities	70
2	Preference for autonomous learning	31
3	Motivation for learning English	28
4	Teachers' control	21
5	Students' awareness of learner autonomy	20
6	Motivating learning experiences	16
7	Autonomy in Vietnamese tertiary context	15

The themes in Table 6.1 are arranged in descending order according to the number of mentions. Each theme consists of several topics, which reflect its complexity and the diversity in participants' attitudes and beliefs. These themes, however, will be discussed following the chronological order they were mentioned in the focus groups. I decided to follow this order in discussing the findings because it preserves the logical sequence and the development of the students' opinions in the focus groups. Also, this order allows me to propose a coherent framework to interpret the findings. Therefore, in the next section, I shall discuss students' motivation for learning English, their conception of motivating learning experiences, their view of teachers'

control and the responsibilities of teachers, their awareness of and preference for autonomous learning, and their view on how learner autonomy is promoted in their learning context. Additionally, I shall make a distinction between opinions of students from the intervention and non-intervention groups and identify the similarities and differences in the perceptions of the students in these groups where relevant. In order to do so, the number of mentions (NoM) and the number of students (NoS) in each focus group that contributed to the topics are included in the tables presenting each emerging theme.

6.2.4 Discussion and Comments

6.2.4.1 *Motivation for learning English*

Table 6.2: Motivation for learning English (N=18)

Topics	Total	FG 1 (N=8)		FG 2 (N=6)		FG 3 (N=4)	
	NoM	NoM	NoS	NoM	NoS	NoM	NoS
Enjoy learning English	11	5	5	5	4	1	1
Job opportunities	4	3	3	1	1	0	0
Success in learning	4	0	0	3	3	1	1
Admiration of others	3	1	1	2	2	0	0
Teachers' influence	2	0	0	0	0	2	2
Parents' will	2	1	1	1	1	0	0
Existing environment	1	0	0	1	1	0	0
Study abroad	1	1	1	0	0	0	0

This theme emerges from the question “How did you get to learn English?” which was used as an ice-breaker in the focus groups. Besides eliciting information about the students’ language learning experiences, this question resulted in a fuller understanding about students’ motivation to learn English, which I have found very important to the implementation of the intervention programme.

Most students in the focus groups expressed that they are motivated in learning English. For some of them, this motivation comes from success in learning. For others, learning English is instrumental in finding a good job in the future. From Table 6.2 above, it is possible to categorise the items into two types of motivation, namely intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Items such as ‘enjoy learning English’ and ‘success in learning’ can be considered to be intrinsic motivation as they indicate that students learn English for its ‘inherent satisfactions’ (Ryan and Deci, 2000). These account for 15 out of a total of 28 mentions about motivation. For intervention students, i.e., FG 1 and FG 2, nine out of fourteen students expressed that they enjoy learning English and three out of fourteen said that they are motivated by success in learning the language. This is a good condition for promoting learner autonomy among these students because intrinsic motivation is conducive to learner autonomy (Dickinson, 1995; Ushioda, 1996). This was also beneficial to my intervention programme as the students were eager to explore strategies to learn English more effectively and active in providing me with useful and trustworthy information for my study. The following comments demonstrate students’ intrinsic motivation in learning English.

Extract 6.1

When I was in grade 6 and 7, I found myself to be quite good at learning English so I decided to take English as my main subject to learn. (Focus group 1 – Thien – Q1)

Extract 6.2

I am better at English than other subjects, so I chose English as my major at the university. (Focus group 2 – Anh – Q1)

In essence, the extracts above may allow us to surmise that the motivations of these students are more intrinsic because people tend to enjoy learning the subjects they are

good at. Nevertheless, there are other reasons that motivate the students to learn English. These reasons are presented in the extracts below.

Extract 6.3

I decided to learn English because it could offer me a wide range of jobs for my future career. (Focus group 1 – Nguyet – Q1)

Extract 6.4

I like to learn English, especially after I learned that 100% of graduates in this major were able to find a job upon graduation. (Focus group 2 – Anh – Q1)

Unlike the students in Extract 6.1 and Extract 6.2, who chose to learn English as a major because they were good at the subject, the students in Extract 6.3 and Extract 6.4 had more pragmatic reasons for learning English. For them, English brings about the opportunities for a good career in the future. As these students learn English for its ‘instrumental value’, this reason can be classified as extrinsic motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2000).

Although intrinsic motivation is more preferable because it results in high-quality learning and creativity, this motivation becomes weaker as students get to a higher level of studying (*ibid.*). According to Ryan and Deci (2000: 60), “this is especially the case after early childhood, as the freedom to be intrinsically motivated becomes increasingly curtailed by social demands and roles that require individuals to assume responsibility for non-intrinsically interesting tasks”. At the tertiary level, students are no longer necessarily motivated by their enjoyment of a subject but rather by the perceived benefits it can bring to them, as exemplified in Extract 6.3 and Extract 6.4. Therefore, the central issue for educators is to “motivate students to value and self-regulate such activities, and without external pressure, to carry them out on their own” (*ibid.*). In doing so, they will

provide a momentum for learning and a catalyst for the subsequent development of intrinsic motivation (Deci and Ryan, 1985).

In general, this theme identifies the students' motivation for learning English by revealing their reasons for choosing the subject as a major. It is important to note that the majority students of the two intervention focus groups (i.e., nine out of fourteen) stated enjoyment in learning English as the reason for this choice. As for other students, they are also strongly motivated by their wishes to study abroad or to have a good career. These motivations have an essential role as the driving force that provides the students with the energy and the determination needed to make effort in learning. However, it is more important that these motivations are maintained and promoted in the teaching and learning process. This point will be the focus of the next theme.

6.2.4.2 *Motivating learning experience*

Table 6.3: Motivating learning experiences (N=14)

Topics	Total NoM	FG 1 (N=8)		FG 2 (N=6)		FG 3 (N=4)	
		NoM	NoS	NoM	NoS	NoM	NoS
Challenging assignments	6	0	0	6	4	0	0
Independence	3	0	0	3	2	0	0
Encouragement	2	1	1	1	1	0	0
Opportunity for practice	2	0	0	2	2	0	0
Usefulness	2	1	1	1	1	0	0
Teacher's inspiration	1	1	1	0	0	0	0

Similar to the previous theme, this theme is also concerned with students' motivation in learning English. Nevertheless, the topics categorised into this theme are examples of what students found motivating in their language learning experiences. These

examples were given by the students in their responses to the question about the language learning experience they remembered the most. This question was only raised in Focus group 1 and 2 (intervention students) because I decided to concentrate on other topics with Focus group 3.

This theme provides an insight into students' learning preferences and ways to enhance their motivation in learning. Four students posited that the factor that brought them the most motivation was the challenging assignments. About these assignments, a student commented as follows.

Extract 6.5

The most interesting learning experience to me is the assignments I have had at the university, such as last year's project work or writing assignments like the reflection essay in the British and American culture course. In last year's project work, it was the first time my friends and I had worked together in a group to write a complete project report in English. (Focus group 2 – Lam – Q3)

According to the student in Extract 6.5 above, her fondness for assignments originated from her appreciation of the opportunities to collaborate with classmates in the course of doing these assignments. In addition, the assignments were challenging in terms of the level they required her to put her language skills into use. This example suggests that students can be motivated by learning tasks that require them to work together and that stretch their level to a certain extent. The latter point is also made in the following extract which also belongs to the 'Opportunities for practice' in Table 6.3.

Extract 6.6

For me, I enjoy the way I was taught at OLS (NB: Oxford English School). Thanks to that experience, I decided to drop science-related subjects and chose English as my major at the university. At OLS, I was made to speak English, to speak aloud and

clearly. When my teacher asked me a question, I had to come up with an answer rather than remain quiet. (Focus group 2 – Phuong – Q2)

Two students expressed that they were motivated by learning activities that allowed them to work independently. They also highlighted the effectiveness of these activities, as in the extract below.

Extract 6.7

Compared with last year, my teachers gave me more homework this year. Therefore I had to search for information and did the homework on my own. In class, my teachers gave comments on my work. Because this was what I had already done, I remembered the details. Thus the teachers only needed to make a few recommendations to my work and I was still able to retain them better and gain more experience. (Focus group 2 – Truong – Q2)

In essence, students of intervention focus groups (i.e., FC 1 and FC 2) expressed that their interest in learning was increased when they were given challenging assignments which allowed them to work independently of the teacher and apply their skills in practice. This finding has provided me with a better understanding of how students’ motivation in learning English can be boosted. Moreover, the experiences that these students recited in this theme played an important role in my approach to develop and maintain their motivation during the ILTP.

6.2.4.3 *Teachers’ control*

Table 6.4: Teachers’ control (N=18)

Topics	Total NoM	FG 1 (N=8)		FG 2 (N=6)		FG 3 (N=4)	
		NoM	NoS	NoM	NoS	NoM	NoS
Against	11	4	2	4	3	3	2
For	10	1	1	8	5	1	1

Related to the factors motivating students in learning discussed in the previous section, teachers' control is a theme that generated a heated debate among the participants in all three groups. The students were evenly divided about whether there should be some form of teachers' control to enforce and ensure students' learning. In the context of these focus groups, teachers' control can be defined as teachers' active involvement in deciding what students should learn. Slightly more than half of the opinions were against this control because the students thought that being university students meant they should take responsibility for choosing what they wanted to learn. Moreover, they asserted that it is necessary that students control their own learning because this brings them motivation. These opinions are also in line with students' perception of teachers as guidance providers which will be discussed in the next section. The extract below describes the active role that the students wanted to play in controlling their learning and what they needed their teachers to do to help them fulfil this role.

Extract 6.8

I think as students we need to be responsible for our learning rather than waiting for someone to tell us what to learn. That was the way we did at lower level. At this level, take reading for example, the teacher should only help students to learn the best way to read. (Focus group 1 – Nguyet – Q4)

By contrast, those who supported teachers' control argued that this is needed because students often lack self-discipline. For these students, although they were aware of the need to take responsibility for their own learning, the excuses for the failure to do so stem from laziness. Nevertheless, teachers' control in this case was understood as teachers' continuous monitoring of students' learning process. For some students, without this control a programme for promoting learner autonomy is unlikely to succeed however well-designed it can be. This can be surmised in the extract below.

Extract 6.9

I don't like to take the initiative to learn on my own very much because I'm kind of a lazy person. Besides I often feel stressed and only like to sleep. Thus, teachers need to give me much homework because when I have a lot of homework to do, I have the learning objectives. Moreover, doing homework helps me to identify what confuses me so that I can ask teachers for help. (Focus group 2 – Kim – Q4)

Although the debate over teachers' control discussed above seems to highlight a substantial gap between the 'for' and 'against' opinions, an intermediary solution also emerged from the discussion. In the extract below, the student offered an alternative view on the issue.

Extract 6.10

Although teachers control our learning by giving us assignments, this offers us autonomy in other aspects. We have autonomy in finding information and deciding the best way to complete the assignments. (Focus group 2 – Lam – Q4)

According to the student in Extract 6.10 above, assignments can be considered as the control teachers exert on students. However, students have their autonomy in deciding how to complete these assignments. In other words, assignments given by teachers provide the objectives and directions students need while they have the freedom to choose the best way to meet these objectives. Interestingly, this suggestion is in line with an assertion about promoting autonomy in the Vietnamese educational context, made by L.C.T. Nguyen and Gu's (2013: 25), who contend that "despite the lack of a voice in curriculum design, learners can be empowered to make decisions on how to learn." In the following extract, the student suggested that teachers could offer a choice of activities to help students achieve the learning objectives and students could choose the one they found suitable. These suggestions pave the way for a mid-way approach which will be discussed further in section 6.2.4.6, which explores the students' preference for autonomous learning.

Extract 6.11

As I have said, teachers can offer various activities that aim to achieve the same objectives. I think that is the responsibility of teachers. As for students, they can choose the ones that they like. It is not effective if students are made to follow teachers' decisions only. (Focus group 2 – Luc – Q4)

One student suggested that the learning contract, as used in the ILTP, was a useful way for teacher to 'force' the students to do something which they can later find interesting. This point is illustrated in the conversation in the extract below.

Extract 6.12

Luc: I like to create opportunities for myself. I mean doing what I like helps me learn better because I learn it naturally.

Phuong: I agree, but not anyone can do that. There were some grammar points that I did not care about. However, after signing the learning contract, I started to pay attention to them and find them interesting. I started to like something I used to hate. Therefore, the teacher has created an opportunity for me to know what I like so I can engage in learning. (Focus group 2 – Luc & Phuong – Q4)

It is interesting to note that three out of six intervention students in Focus group 2 expressed their wish for opportunities to decide what they like to learn rather than to be told by teachers. On the other hand, five out of six students in the same group were in favour of teachers exerting some form of pressure and monitoring to ensure that they actually engage in learning. This paradox will be discussed in the next section in the light of Hofstede and Hofstede's (2005) distinction between the 'desirable' and 'the desired'.

In conclusion, both the intervention and non-intervention students were in favour of having more freedom to choose what they like to learn. However, the intervention students, in particular, admitted that they needed teachers' supervision to provide them with some pressure to learn. These students suggested that teachers could give

them assignments, offer choices or use the learning contract as various ways to give them freedom in learning and at the same time ensure that they do engage in learning.

6.2.4.4 Perceptions of teachers' responsibilities

Following the discussion on teachers' control in the preceding section, this section is concerned with the students' perceptions of the responsibilities of teachers in helping them to learn English. This theme attracts the most responses from the student participants. This phenomenon can be argued to signify that students value the presence of teachers and expect them to play a significant role in their learning process. On the other hand, similar to the findings provided by the quantitative data, the fact that this is the most mentioned topic might mean that students are teacher-dependent as they seem to rely on the teachers to facilitate their learning (c.f. section 5.4.2).

Table 6.5 presents students' perceptions of teachers' responsibilities as expressed in the focus groups. The table also shows the number of students in the intervention and non-intervention focus groups with the topics they mentioned. Although the agendas of the focus groups varied as I adjusted the focused topics and guiding questions as the study progressed, the number of mentions and students from the intervention and non-intervention group corresponds with the proportion between the groups. In other words, there is no significant discrepancy between the students in intervention and non-intervention groups in their responses in each topic in this theme.

Table 6.5: Perceptions of teachers' responsibilities (N=18)

Topics	Total	FG 1 (N=8)		FG 2 (N=6)		FG 3 (N=4)	
	NoM	NoM	NoS	NoM	NoS	NoM	NoS
Provide guidance	13	7	6	2	2	4	4
Press students to learn	10	1	1	6	2	3	2
Create opportunities	10	1	1	6	5	3	3
Point out students' strengths and weaknesses	6	6	5	0	0	0	0
Provide information on subjects	5	3	2	1	1	1	1
Stimulate students' interest in learning	5	0	0	4	3	1	1
Motivate students	4	3	3	0	0	1	1
Support students' learning	4	1	1	0	0	3	3
Help students make progress outside class	2	0	0	2	2	0	0
Care for students	2	2	2	0	0	0	0
Listen to learners' opinions	2	2	2	0	0	0	0
Offer choices	2	1	1	1	1	0	0
Choose activity	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Give comments on students' performance	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Explain the purpose of exercise	1	0	0	1	1	0	0
Introduce materials for learning	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Understand students' needs	1	1	1	0	0	0	0

The responsibilities of teachers as perceived by the students cover a broad spectrum, ranging from providing guidance to students to understanding their needs. Some responsibilities are typical for teachers in the Confucian culture, where they are considered not only teachers but also mentors, with roles such as caring for students and stimulating their interest in learning. Others are more directly related to the process of teaching and learning and can be explored further to reveal how much

students rely on teachers. In this respect, the three responsibilities that account for almost half of the mentions (33 out of 70), namely ‘provide guidance’, ‘create opportunities’ and ‘press students to learn’, will be discussed below.

- Provide guidance

Talking about the responsibilities of the teacher, both intervention (eight out of fourteen students) and non-intervention (four out of four students) groups heartily asserted that they needed the teacher to provide them with guidance. In their view, the teacher’s responsibility is not to impart knowledge to them or teach them to do something but to guide them in a systematic process of searching, exploring and mastering knowledge and skills. The students argued that at the tertiary level - as they had at the time become more mature - the roles of the teacher should be less controlling and become more supporting. This attitude is conducive to the promotion of learner autonomy, especially with the teacher-guided/learner-decided approach suggested in this study. In other words, the approach that enables teachers to provide scaffolding to students and gradually transfer control in the classroom to them would be suitable in this context because the students had a positive attitude towards taking greater responsibility for their own learning.

It is important to note that in Vietnamese primary and secondary education, the dominant method of teaching has been teachers reading out their prepared script for students to note down, or pointing out the part of the course book which should be learned by heart. In this case, students are forced to learn what teachers deem important to them and examinations are the occasions where students are expected to recite what they have memorised. Therefore, it is understandable that these students expected learning in the university to be more liberal and allow them to decide what

they want to learn. This desire for more students' control in learning is reflected in the following extract in which the student expressed that she did not want teachers to impose their will on students.

Extract 6.13

I think that at lower levels teachers convey knowledge to students. However, at this level (i.e., *tertiary education*, author's notes) teachers should no longer be a person who teaches but a person who guides the students. At this level, I think teachers should not be coercive over students. (Focus group 1 – Thien – Q2)

While students from all three focus groups agreed that the teacher should be the person who guided them in learning, they had different opinions on what kind of guidance they needed. In general, it seems that their desire is an understandable reaction to the way they were taught in lower level, which had stifled their freedom. However, what they did not realise is the fact that that experience also results in generations of dependent learners, those who may react to being told what to learn but who become clueless if allowed to work on their own. This can be verified by looking into what these students, both intervention and non-intervention, specifically needed from teachers' guidance, i.e., direction and method of learning. This phenomenon can be argued to be related to what Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) have referred to as 'the desirable' vs. 'the desired'. In this study, the desirable is how the students think teachers ought to be and the desired is what students want in practice. In other words, for the students, while it is desirable that teachers allow students freedom to control their learning process, what they actually want is the teacher's involvement in giving them directions and methods in learning.

The students need teachers to give them the direction in learning because it is a common belief among students that teachers are experts in the field. This view can be found in the extract below.

Extract 6.14

Perhaps teachers should talk to students to know their learning goals. For example, if I want to get a certificate or reach a certain level in English in two years' time, the teacher can help me by telling me what I should do to achieve that goal. When I set my goals, I will try my best to achieve it. However, I think with teachers' guidance I will have a clearer idea of the way to achieve my goals than working on it by myself. (Focus group 1 – Phuong – Q2)

The view expressed above clearly demonstrates students' level of dependence on teachers. Although the student has set herself a goal, she would rather the teacher 'tell her what she should do' to achieve her goal than to set her own direction first and then consult the teacher. This can be attributed to their earlier education as students admitted that they lack the ability to make a learning plan to achieve their goals. Therefore, it is important for me to equip students with these skills if I want to promote learner autonomy among these students. Chapter 7 will assess the extent to which the ILTP has helped the intervention students develop their skills in making a learning plan (see sections 7.2.3.1 and 7.3.4.2).

Not only do the intervention and non-intervention students need teachers to point out the direction in learning, they also want teachers to advise them how to learn. This is evident in students' eagerness to find out 'the best way to learn English' as I have discussed in previous chapters (c.f. section 3.2). The following comment is typical of students' desire for effective learning methods.

Extract 6.15

I think the role of teachers is to provide guidance. Teachers should guide students through the process of learning something. For example, in reading teachers can tell students how to read and answer comprehension questions quickly and accurately. Teachers can also tell students effective tips to use in doing exercises. (Focus group 1 – Thu – Q2)

Extracts 6.13 - 6.15 exhibit the diversity in the students' conception of the role of teachers as guidance providers. They also display the contradiction in what the students expect. To use Hofstede and Hofstede's (2005) terms discussed above, their 'desirable' scenario is teachers helping them to explore and master knowledge without imposing their will on the students. However, they admitted that they were at a loss for what to do in that situation. Hence their 'desired' reality is teachers telling them what to do and teaching them strategies to learn effectively.

- Press students to learn

This topic highlights the contradiction in the students' attitudes towards teachers' control and their perception of teachers' role in the learning process (c.f. section 6.2.4.3). While the students in the focus groups expressed that they wanted teachers to play the role of a merely guidance provider, five students (three out of fourteen intervention and two out of four non-intervention students) admitted that they need some kind of pressure from the teacher in order to be able to kick-start their independent learning. In the focus groups, students stressed the importance of constant monitoring by the teacher as it has a positive effect on them. For these students, continual pressure from the teacher helps them stay focused on learning and makes them learn more effectively. It also helps them overcome their laziness and indiscipline.

Extract 6.16

Sometimes I am required to learn something but I feel very interested. Gradually, the requirement becomes the motivation for me to learn autonomously. (Focus group 2 – Truong – Q2)

The comment made by the student in Extract 6.16 above is significant in two ways. First it suggests a gradual transfer of control from teachers to students in the process of promoting learner autonomy. In other words, it is necessary that teachers have more control initially to create a learning momentum for the students before allowing them more control when they have become more aware of their active role in learning. This momentum can be provided by the use of the learning contract, as suggested by a student in Extract 6.12. Secondly, the comment shed lights on the issue of how extrinsic motivation can be turned into intrinsic one. In this case, extrinsic motivation can be developed by teachers to help students start learning. With proper guidance and supervision, students may gradually develop an interest in learning and hence develop intrinsic motivation which is needed for autonomous learning.

- Create opportunities

Although the findings from quantitative data have confirmed that students do not consider teachers to have the main responsibility for creating opportunities for them to practise (see section 5.5.1), qualitative data from the focus groups seem to reveal otherwise. Five out of nine students who contributed to this topic agreed that they preferred the teacher to provide them with activities both in class and outside class where they can apply what they learn and develop language skills. This belief is reflected in the following extract.

Extract 6.17

Teachers should create opportunities for students to improve their ability and discover new things around them at home. As for English, students will have more interest and motivation to learn. I think this is a role of teachers. (Focus group 2 – Kim – Q4)

In Extract 6.17, the student argued that she would be more motivated and interested in learning English if teachers could create opportunities that help her improve ability and explore new things about English. This expectation is also shared by four other students in their comments about the role of teachers in stimulating their interest in learning. According to these students, the explorative types of learning activities introduced by teachers are instrumental in developing their interest and motivation in learning. The extract below will elaborate on this point.

Extract 6.18

I'm interested in the role of teacher in stimulating students' interest. I mean their teaching methods should make students interested in learning, which helps them become active learners. For example, besides in-class activities, teachers can organise other activities outside class for students to exert their independence and utilise their ability. (Focus group 3 – Dieu – Q5)

Extract 6.17 and 6.18 have revealed the reasons why students preferred teachers to create opportunities for them to learn and how this is related with the role of teachers in stimulating students' interest in learning. In spite of this, these examples still underline the students' dependence on teachers for creating opportunities for them and enhancing their motivation in learning. Nevertheless, the reason given by the students in the following extract is worth noting.

Extract 6.19

I think teachers should create opportunities for students to practise their skills in class. Teachers can introduce activities for students to practise their English. If teachers talk all the time then students will not have the opportunities to practise speaking. (Focus group 1- Tran – Q4)

It can be argued from the comment in Extract 6.19 that students' preference for teachers to create the opportunities to practise for them does not necessarily imply that they are teacher-dependent. For this student, creating opportunities means teachers stepping back and giving students the floor to demonstrate their skills. This comment can be considered to be a good signal for autonomous learning. Even though the majority of students expressed their preference for teachers to create opportunities for them to practise English, there are noteworthy comments from a small number of students about the benefits of students creating opportunities for themselves. This will be discussed in section 6.2.4.6 (Extracts 6.28 – 6.30).

The theme 'Perceptions of teachers' responsibilities' consists of a considerable number of duties that students expect their teachers to fulfil. Apart from the three most mentioned topics discussed above, six other topics were also frequently mentioned by the students. These responsibilities include 'point out students' strengths and weaknesses', 'provide information on subjects', 'stimulate students' interest in learning', 'motivate students', 'support students' learning', and 'help students make progress outside class'. The fact that these responsibilities were more frequently mentioned confirms the proposition above that teachers have an important role to play in scaffolding students' learning and develop their ability to learn on their own. On the other hand, the presence of these topics in the upper part of the list demonstrates that the students were still considerably dependent on teachers in learning.

In conclusion, the students in the three focus groups expressed that they want to take a more active role in learning with teachers acting as their guides. They expected that studying at the tertiary level afforded them the freedom in learning by allowing them

to decide what and how to learn. However, in order for students to take greater responsibility of their learning, it is essential that they are taught how to organise and manage their learning. In addition, students also need to be equipped with effective learning strategies. In other words, it is reasonable to conclude that a course of learner training which aims to improve students' metacognitive knowledge and learning strategies is a prerequisite for promoting learner autonomy among the students from both intervention or non-intervention group. Additionally, an adequate level of teacher control and monitoring is needed to provide scaffolding and create motivation for students' learning. This will also help to urge students to take more responsibility and begin to learn on their own.

6.2.4.5 *Students' awareness of learner autonomy*

Table 6.6: Students' awareness of learner autonomy (N=18)

Topics	Total	FG 1 (N=8)		FG 2 (N=6)		FG 3 (N=4)	
	NoM	NoM	NoS	NoM	NoS	NoM	NoS
Awareness of autonomy	20	1	1	10	5	9	4

This theme ran through all three focus groups' discussion of the question "What does it mean to be an autonomous learner?" As the previous section has found that the students in all the focus groups want to take a more active role in learning, this interesting question allows me to draw the connection between students' perception of taking an active role in learning and learner autonomy. Moreover, this affords me the opportunity to explore the students' understanding of how learner autonomy is demonstrated in their daily learning activities. This understanding can be quite simplistic, as expressed in the following extract.

Extract 6.20

I think being autonomous in class means contributing your opinions to the lesson. Teachers often give a topic for class discussion and ask for students' opinions. This is voluntary so you need to take the initiative. (Focus group 3 – Thanh – Q2)

In the comment above, the student saw learner autonomy as taking the initiative in class. This quality is demonstrated in various self-initiated learning activities which will be discussed in section 6.2.4.6, such as expressing their opinions, preparing for the lessons in advance by reading, and avoiding using Vietnamese in class. This understanding is popular among students and teachers as they reckon autonomous learners to be pro-active, well-prepared learners. In addition, learner autonomy was also believed to lead to more self-study which helps students achieve more in learning. This point is made in the following extract.

Extract 6.21

I think autonomous learning will help us learn better because we all agree that learner autonomy helps us to be able to learn on our own. This helps us achieve more than when we learn in class only. [...] When we learn on our own, we increase the learning time. While we follow the activities in class, we need to take the initiative in learning outside class. If we are autonomous, we will be able to study on our own. At least we will actively do our homework. Therefore, the time we devote to self-study will increase and we will gain more knowledge. (Focus group 2 – Truong – Q4)

In essence, taking the initiative and being able to learn on one's own were the two qualities that were widely associated with autonomous learners. Nevertheless, there are more sophisticated views of autonomous learners, as described in the extract below.

Extract 6.22

First of all, we must understand ourselves. We must know what our strengths are. We must also know our weaknesses and how to overcome them. For me, that is autonomy in learning. (Focus group 2 – Anh – Q3)

This view clearly differentiates the metacognitive level from the cognitive level in students' understanding of learner autonomy. In the quote above, the student expressed an awareness of the process of learning and deep thinking about themselves as English learners. In line with this, other students also suggested that autonomous learning required a more systematic approach to learning which included setting objectives, making learning plans and choosing learning methods.

Extract 6.23

I think I've become more autonomous since I started studying at the University. I know how to work according to a plan and how to make a plan. I was not like this before. I did not think beyond the here and now. When I entered the university, if I did not have a plan for studying, I would be left behind and have to go after others. I was perplexed by the learning method at the university because I had not been taught how to make a plan for learning in high school. Therefore I was bored with learning in the first year. Later, when I knew how to make a plan, I found that I had made good progress and become more proactive in learning. (Focus group 3 – Ly – Q6)

To summarise, this section has demonstrated various levels in students' understanding of learner autonomy. These levels range from a simplistic view of autonomy as taking the initiative in learning and self-studying to a more sophisticated one which is concerned with metacognitive knowledge, such as understanding oneself and managing learning. This revelation has helped me to gain insights into the students' perceptions of the autonomous learning process and come up with an appropriate pedagogical approach to incorporate these perceptions into the process of promoting learner autonomy in the intervention programme. Additionally, the findings in this section provide the necessary background for the analysis of students' preference for autonomous learning which is the focus of the following section.

6.2.4.6 Preference for autonomous learning

During the process of coding the focus group transcriptions, I came across several topics that were brought up by the students while they followed the planned schedule. ‘Preference for learner autonomy’ is an attitude that emerged from the interaction among students in the focus groups. This theme is presented in Table 6.7 below.

Table 6.7: Preference for autonomous learning (N=18)

Topics	Total	FG 1 (N=8)		FG 2 (N=6)		FG 3 (N=4)	
	NoM	NoM	NoS	NoM	NoS	NoM	NoS
Taking the initiative	8	1	1	0	0	7	3
Creating opportunities for oneself	5	1	1	4	3	0	0
Deciding what and how to learn	5	3	3	2	2	0	0
Preparing for lessons by reading	4	0	0	3	2	1	1
Setting one's learning objectives	3	1	1	1	1	1	1
Taking responsibility	3	0	0	1	1	2	2
Less teacher involvement	1	0	0	1	1	0	0
Making suggestions	1	0	0	1	1	0	0
Preferring to work on one's own	1	0	0	1	1	0	0

Although the predominant theme, as discussed earlier, is the students’ perception of teachers’ roles, which reflects their dependence on teachers, the intervention and non-intervention students also expressed their wishes for more control by taking more active roles in the learning process. These included taking the initiative in learning, creating opportunities for oneself, making decisions on what and how to learn, preparing for lessons and setting one’s own learning objectives.

- Taking the initiative

This topic lends itself to the students' perception of teachers as guidance providers that has been discussed in section 6.2.4.3. Moreover, as I have discussed in the previous section, taking the initiative was also considered by the students to be a quality of an autonomous learner. In this vein, since students prefer to have more control of their own learning, they are aware that they need to play a more active role by taking the initiative and engaging in self-initiated learning activities. According to eight comments from four students (one in FC 1 and 3 in FC3), these activities include taking an active approach to learning in the classroom, such as offering their opinions to contribute to the lesson and using English only in class. Besides, there are outside-class activities, such as practising English skills by watching English programmes and reading materials to prepare for lessons. The extracts below illustrate students' perception of the implications of taking the initiative.

Extract 6.24

I think taking the initiative means I have to speak English in class and avoid using Vietnamese. But I think this is not easy. I know it requires a high level of discipline and only a self-disciplined person can do this. As for me, I still speak Vietnamese unless the teacher reminds me not to. (Focus group 3 – Ly – Q4)

Extract 6.25

In my opinion, the textbooks have a lot of information so I should take the initiative to read it at home before class. If there is anything I do not understand, I will find other books to read more about them. (Focus group 3 – Thanh – Q4)

In Extract 6.25 above, the student mentioned reading textbook in preparation for lessons as an example of an active approach to learning. This view was also shared by four other students who suggested that if teachers could encourage students to explore the lesson in advance, their learning would be more effective and students would

retain knowledge better. For these students, they found it more motivating when they can discover new things for themselves. The teacher in this scenario could support students learning by introducing materials and commenting and supplementing what students had learned on their own. The extract below demonstrates this expectation.

Extract 6.26

My expectation stems from my most valuable learning experience. I like to learn on my own. Like what others have said, I find that I learn more things, understand them better and remember them longer when I learn something on my own. Therefore I expect my English teachers to encourage learners to read in advance. This is not a new thing. Learners should read the material at home and prepare for the lesson in advance. Teachers will know their level so that they can provide useful information to them in class. (Focus group 2 – Anh – Q2)

The extracts above illustrate how students translate the meaning of ‘taking the initiative’ into specific actions in learning. It can be argued that actions, such as speaking English in class or preparing for lessons by reading materials in advance, are the least of the ‘usual requirements’ for students. However, a vital aspect of students’ taking the initiative is the awareness of their own roles and responsibilities. In other words, they must be aware that they are the main agent who has the power and means to direct their own learning. The importance of this awareness is highlighted in the extract below.

Extract 6.27

I think if the student does not take the initiative and is not proactive in group work then the teacher cannot force them to. For example, I learn English speaking, which typically requires me to practise every day. However, if I do not want to speak English, the teacher cannot force me to because it’s my right to do what I want. (Focus group 3 – Phung – Q4)

It is apparent from the discussion in the focus groups, as exemplified in the extracts above, that students are well aware of what is expected of them at the tertiary level of

education. Thus, they are willing to do more on their part in the learning process. In essence, the students agreed that they should be more active and make more effort in learning.

- Creating opportunities for oneself

In line with taking the initiative in learning, the students also showed their willingness to share the responsibility in creating opportunities for practising English. Specifically, one student suggested that students can create opportunities for themselves but the teacher should provide support when they meet difficulties. The extract below reflects this suggestion.

Extract 6.28

I find that both students and teachers should share this responsibility. For example, we create opportunities for ourselves but when we have difficulties in this process we can ask teachers for help. (Focus group 1 – Kim – Q5)

Unlike the student in Extract 6.28, another student in Extract 6.29 below asserted that students creating opportunities for practice for themselves could be a better option. According to this student, when students create the opportunities for themselves, they have the freedom to choose what suits their learning preferences.

Extract 6.29

I think we should create opportunities for ourselves. We will choose what we like to do and learn from that. Opportunities created by teachers can be good but can also be compulsory. Hence they are not as good as those we create for ourselves. (Focus group 1 – Luc – Q5)

Extract 6.28 and Extract 6.29 have demonstrated students' willingness to share responsibility and desire to have control of their learning. Additionally, their readiness to create opportunities for themselves indicates good awareness of their own learning needs, which can be identified in the following extract.

Extract 6.30

I think if teachers have to create opportunities for students, they must do so for many students whose abilities are different from each other. Whereas, if we create opportunities for ourselves, these will be suitable not only for our abilities but also for our situations and available time. Therefore, it is better that students create opportunities for themselves. (Focus group 2 – Truong – Q2)

The student in Extract 6.30 above demonstrated good metacognitive knowledge about learning. Being aware of her ability and learning needs, she wanted to take control in creating learning opportunities for herself. This example highlights that it is important the students be made aware of their role and power in controlling their learning process by creating their own learning opportunities.

- Deciding what and how to learn

If taking the initiative and creating opportunities for oneself can be considered to be expected actions taken by students who are aware of the need to take an active role in learning, there are other activities that came up in the discussions that suggest students are willing to play a leading role in the relationship with their teachers. This is reflected by their interest and confidence in talking about their desire for freedom to make decisions about their learning, namely deciding what and how to learn, setting their learning objectives, and planning their learning.

Extract 6.31

I think the teacher should ask students' opinions before introducing an activity. They should not get students to follow their will. If students are compelled to do something, they will not achieve good results. (Focus group 1 – Thien – Q4)

Extract 6.32

I think students should decide what they want to learn. The teachers can recommend various activities for achieving a learning objective. If they are afraid that students follow the wrong direction, they can put forward different learning activities for an objective so that students can choose rather than giving them only one choice. (Focus group 2 – Luc – Q5)

Extract 6.33

I think each person has his own capacity for studying and level of ability. Therefore it is better to let him choose his own means and purposes for learning than to depend on teachers. (Focus group 1 – Thien – Q3)

The extracts above present various reasons for students to demand for more control in making decisions about learning. In Extract 6.31, the student suggested that her opinions should be listened to by the teacher because it is difficult for students to achieve good results if they are made to do something. This suggestion echoed the discussion in previous sections about the students' desire for more control in learning at the tertiary level as exemplified in Extract 6.13. The comment also implies that the student felt more motivated if she was asked for the opinions about choosing learning activities. This point is highlighted in Extract 6.32, in which the student acknowledged the importance of having the teacher to ensure that they follow the right direction in learning. Nevertheless, as pointed out in the extract, the student wanted to have the opportunities to make a choice and decide what she wanted to learn. The student in Extract 6.33 added a more important reason for letting the students choose what they wanted to learn. According to her, students should choose their own means and purposes for learning rather than depending on teachers because students are in a better position to be aware of their own capacity for studying and level of ability.

On the whole, the topics in this theme have more or less depicted the students' positive attitudes towards autonomous learning, as exemplified by their desire to make decisions pertaining to their learning and their willingness to accept more responsibility. However, these actions could be argued to be what the students think would be 'desirable' for them to perform while in reality their 'desired' learning condition is a more teacher-directed one with regular teacher guidance and supervision which has been discussed in section 6.2.4.1. This is evident in the contradiction between students' stated willingness to take the initiative and their dependence on teachers for guidance, or between the students' wish for more control in deciding what they want to learn and their acknowledgement of the role of teachers in creating opportunities for them to practise and stimulating their interest in learning. On the other hand, the students' comments in Extract 6.28, Extract 6.31 and Extract 6.32 can be useful as they suggest an approach in which teachers can provide students with guidance and choices to scaffold their learning and develop their capacity so that they are able to engage in autonomous learning. This finding is in line with my own observation about fostering learner autonomy in the Vietnamese educational context in section 2.10). In fact, the roles of teachers described by students in the extracts listed above are in line with Sinclair's (2000a) 'teacher-guided/learner-decided' approach, which I identified as the principal approach for the intervention programme of this study (see Chapter 4). This means teachers will initially take an active role in making students aware of the learning process and offering them the opportunities to make choices and discover their own learning strategies (*ibid.*). This approach will enable students to make informed decisions about their own learning in terms of learning goals, learning strategies, and self-evaluation.

6.2.4.7 *Autonomy in Vietnamese tertiary education context*

Table 6.8: Autonomy in Vietnamese tertiary education context (N=18)

Topics	Total	FG 1 (N=8)		FG 2 (N=6)		FG 3 (N=4)	
	NoM	NoM	NoS	NoM	NoS	NoM	NoS
Students' opinions on autonomy at tertiary level	15	2	2	10	6	3	3

This theme reveals students' assessment of the influence of the university-level learning environment on the development of their ability for autonomous learning. Across the three focus groups, eleven students contributed their opinions to this theme. In general, six out of eleven students agreed that learning at tertiary level helped them develop the ability to take more responsibility for their learning. The students contended that as they entered adulthood, they developed clearer goals for their future and had a better idea of what they wanted to become later on. They also claimed that they became aware that they played the main role in the learning process and learning in class only partly accounted for their progress. In other words, they realised that they needed to rely more on themselves in the quest for knowledge and teachers were no longer their sole source of information. The following comment is a typical example of this improved awareness.

Extract 6.34

... I think I have made progress in terms of learner autonomy in this semester. I think I am more autonomous. I know that besides ... someone told me that in class I only need ... I need to prepare the most part of the lesson at home and only review what I have learned in class. Being a university student, I need to devote most of my time to self-studying. Learning in class only gives me the direction. I only need to check my knowledge and ask others what I do not know because I cannot find that information somewhere else. Since the last semester, the courses and assignments have become more difficult so I need to make greater effort. (Focus group 2 – Lam – Q6)

This improved awareness could be attributed to, as well as further enhanced by, the intervention programme as the students were required to set learning goals for themselves and develop learning plans to achieve them. However, four students pointed out that there were obstacles existing in tertiary education that could hinder the development of learner autonomy. These obstacles included students' habit of dependence on teachers which stems from their past learning experiences (c.f. section 6.2.4.4) and problems related to their learning context such as opportunities to practise English, and a teaching style which resulted in the students' lack of motivation and interest in learning.

Extract 6.35

I think that there are few opportunities for people to practise English in Vietnam. Therefore, although people spend a lot of time learning, they don't make much progress. This also discourages people if they don't have a long term objectives such as to study abroad. People don't think they need to try their best to achieve a high level in English because they don't have an environment to do so. (Focus group 1 – Tran – Q6)

Extract 6.36

I thought that learning at tertiary level would allow me more freedom. In reality it is boring. I feel that my teachers talked too much and I couldn't take in all that they said. (Focus group 2 – Luc – Q6)

In contrast to the negative comment about the teaching method at university level in Extract 6.36 above, another student was content with the learning environment she had been provided with at the University.

Extract 6.37

I think that the learning environment of the University is conducive to developing learner autonomy among students of not only English but also other majors. Students become more active in learning. For example, in project work or preparing for a presentation, if a group has five members one of whom is not an active student, this

student will have to contribute actively to work of the group. I think the University has done well in creating this learning environment. (Focus group 2 – Phuong – Q6)

In conclusion, although it has been generally agreed that learning in the university environment in general and at the University in particular has helped the students develop the capacity to manage their own learning, there are some obstacles in the opportunities for practice and teaching methods that need addressing in order for the promotion of learner autonomy to be more effective.

6.2.5 Conclusions on students' perception of their roles in promoting learner autonomy

The analysis of qualitative data collected by student focus groups has yielded a substantial number of important findings which shed light on my understanding of students' beliefs and expectation in English language learning in general and in the intervention programme in particular. As presented in Section 6.2.4, the rich data offer insights into students' motivation for learning English, their perceptions of their roles and responsibilities in relation to those of teachers, and their desire and awareness of promoting learner autonomy in their own learning context.

Regarding the students' motivation for learning English, it has been found that the majority of students in the intervention focus groups (nine out of fourteen) expressed intrinsic motivation for learning English. This could be considered as an advantage for the intervention although it can be argued that students who volunteered to attend the focus groups are motivated students who actively sought opportunities to improve their learning. Another important finding in terms of motivation is that students were reported to be motivated by challenging assignments and the independence and opportunities for practice that these assignments afforded them.

As for students' perceptions of their roles and responsibilities in relation to those of teachers, the collected data have shown that the students were aware of the higher level of responsibility that was required from them in tertiary education. They also expressed the willingness to take a more active role in learning. However, there is evidence that the students were still largely dependent on teachers for guidance, directions, and learning methods.

Concerning the students' desire and awareness of promoting learner autonomy in their own learning context, the data have shown that the interviewed students have a strong desire for learner autonomy and have taken the initiative to work on their own and control their learning. The students also expressed positive opinions about their immediate learning environment although they still had some concerns about teaching approach and limited opportunities for practice in Vietnam.

6.3 Teachers' perceptions

In this research, six tenured teachers from the University agreed to be interviewed to share with me their understanding about learner autonomy and how it is related to their teaching. One of the teachers was also teaching the intervention group in another subject. All the interviewed teachers were in charge of at least one subject for English-major students. Therefore, they taught the cohort from which I collected data in this research. However, in the interviews, the teachers were asked questions about their experiences with the English-major students in general. The interviews with these teachers were conducted after class in the staffroom at the teachers' convenience. Their durations varied from half to three quarters of an hour.

The teacher interviews were conducted with the aim to explore how learner autonomy in language learning and teaching at the university is perceived from the teachers'

viewpoint. Similar to the student focus groups, the teachers were also asked to comment on the initial findings of the RFAQ. Together with qualitative data collected from student focus groups, interview data from the teachers are useful in three ways. Firstly, these data enable me to develop a multi-angle representation of the university language classroom in relation to learner autonomy. Secondly, they provide this representation with trends and details, generalisation and nuances, and tendency and complexity. Thirdly, they facilitate data triangulation between quantitative (i.e., the RFAQ and PLAQ) and qualitative methods (focus groups and interviews) to ensure the validity and reliability of the representation.

6.3.1 Data management and coding

The interviews were audio recorded with the consent of the teacher. In order to create a relaxing atmosphere and enable teachers to talk freely about their views on learner autonomy, the interviews were conducted in Vietnamese. The recordings of teacher interviews were transcribed using Microsoft Word and the text produced were formatted in preparation for the use of Nvivo.

To ensure confidentiality, the identity of the teachers was coded at this stage. Each teacher was given a pseudonym for this purpose. The number of the questions which were listed in the schedule was also used. A sample code is “Teacher interview – Hai - Q5”, which indicates that the data is from a teacher whose pseudonym was Hai and this piece of data is his response to question five in the interview schedule. The textual data with coded participant information were subsequently imported into Nvivo for analysis.

6.3.2 Data analysis

The teacher interview transcripts were then analysed following the same procedure used with data from student focus groups (see section 6.2.2). After this process, the texts that had been extracted in Nvivo nodes were then translated from Vietnamese to English for data presentation and discussion (see APPENDIX U).

6.3.3 Overview of emerging themes

After the five steps in examining the data with Nvivo, I found six emerging themes which are presented in Table 6.9 below. These themes are ranked in descending order according to the number of mentions. Each theme may consist of several topics that reflect its complexity and the diversity in participants' attitudes and beliefs.

Table 6.9: Emerging themes from teacher interviews (N=6)

	Theme	Number of mentions
1	Teachers' views of their roles and responsibilities	30
2	Teachers' perceptions of students' expectation and ability	25
3	Teachers' understanding of learner autonomy	21
4	Teachers' view of learner autonomy in Vietnam	18
5	Teachers' practice in promoting learner autonomy	15
6	Teachers' perceptions of control in the classroom	11

6.3.4 Discussion and Comments

6.3.4.1 Teachers' views of their roles and responsibilities

Table 6.10: Teachers' views of their roles and responsibilities (N=6)

Topic	NoM	NoT
Motivate students and stimulate their interest in learning	7	5
Help students set learning goals and make learning plans	6	4
Provide learning skills	5	5
Facilitate students' learning by asking guiding questions	4	4
Introduce learning resources to students	3	3
Keep their knowledge up-to-date	1	1
Provide care for students	1	1
Be aware of students' learning style	1	1
Not to force students to learn	1	1
Not to be a provider of knowledge	1	1

In interviews with six teachers, the most frequently mentioned responsibility was to motivate students and stimulate their interest in learning. These teachers believed that it is their responsibility to enhance students' interest in learning English. This belief is highlighted in the extract below.

Extract 6.38

The most important responsibility of teachers is to stimulate learners' interest in learning rather than providing knowledge. The provision of knowledge only plays a minor role in the teachers' responsibilities because knowledge does not only come from teachers but can be found elsewhere. In this era, information can be obtained everywhere. Thus it is important that teachers stimulate learners' interest in learning and provide them with the method of learning, i.e., where to get the information and how to select and use information. The teachers' responsibility is to provide guidance. (Teacher interview – Le – Q5)

Extract 6.38 provides a concise summary of the teachers' shared perceptions of their responsibility in teaching. In this view, the fundamental aim of teaching is not to impart knowledge to students but to inspire them and enable them to seek and obtain knowledge. This view reflects the teachers' awareness of the need to enhance students' motivation to help them learn effectively. In the same vein, one teacher even asserted that teachers are not only responsible for students' motivation to learn English in class but also outside class. According to her, teachers need to do their best to ensure that students are motivated to learn on their own outside class by stimulating their interest in learning in class.

Extract 6.39

I think whether students make progress outside class depends on themselves. However, teachers have an important role in this matter. In class, the way teachers stimulate students' interest in learning will have a big influence on their progress outside class. [...] I think we must find a way to encourage students so that they can learn outside class without teachers' presence. (Teacher Interview – Ngoc – Q5)

The teachers' views of their role in promoting students' interest in learning in these interviews are somewhat inconsistent with the findings of the PLAQ. According to the PLAQ, the surveyed teachers only rated their level of responsibility in stimulating students' interest at a mean score of 3.88, with '4' being 'Mainly' responsible. This perception of responsibility is found to be significantly lower than the students' expectation (see section 5.6.4.1). Perhaps, when teachers' and students' responsibility for stimulating the students' interest in learning are placed next to each other, the surveyed teachers could have made a conscious decision in suggesting that students should be mainly responsible for their own interest in learning. Teachers also have a considerable amount of responsibility in this matter, but they need the students to be able to take this responsibility by themselves.

In terms of the role of the teacher in teaching English, most teachers agreed that they should play the role of a ‘learning facilitator’, i.e., a person with expertise to help students explore the language. In order to fulfil this role, they listed some responsibilities, such as providing learning skills to students (c.f. Extract 6.38), asking guiding questions, helping students set learning goals and make plans, and introducing learning resources to them (i.e., items number 2-5 in Table 6.10). These activities had been used by the interviewed teachers in their day-to-day teaching to help students develop autonomy. In fact, these responsibilities had been fulfilled by various teaching activities which will be discussed in section 6.3.4.5. The extracts below illustrate teachers’ view on how to fulfil the learning facilitating role.

Extract 6.40

For example, as for learning at the university level, I think the teacher should only raise questions, or help students raise questions. Students will try to find the answers and the teacher will confirm on the final answers. (Teacher Interview – Thanh – Q7)

Extract 6.41

In my opinion, I do not regard myself as an instructor or teacher. I am just a facilitator. In other words, I raise questions to guide students in their learning activities rather than performing the activities for them. I think that students will learn more when they do the activities by themselves. Therefore, I prefer not to provide the answers but let students find out on their own and I will only conclude or give comments at the end of an activity. For example, I will tell them what they have done well and what they need to improve. (Teacher Interview – Ngoc – Q5)

In line with the view that teachers are facilitators who help students learn how to learn, one interviewed teacher stressed the importance of students being the main agent in the learning process. In particular, she asserted that teachers should not force students to learn. However, for students who lack motivation in learning, the teacher may need to be more caring and supportive, as suggested in the extract below.

Extract 6.42

I think teachers have multiple roles to play. Teachers should play the role of a facilitator to provide guidance for students in learning. Sometimes they also need to play a more traditional role in paying attention to individual students and provide them with more substantial assistance. I would prefer to play the role of a learning facilitator only, because the students have the potential for learning. However, the traditional role is also needed for certain classes because they lack motivation for learning. (Teacher Interview – Hong – Q6)

6.3.4.2 Teachers' perceptions of students' expectation and ability

Table 6.11: Teachers' perceptions of students' expectation and ability (N=6)

Topic	NoM	NoT
Teachers' expected roles	6	3
Students can be autonomous if they are made aware of LA and its benefits	4	3
Students are not autonomous at the time of speaking	10	4
Students need teachers' guidance to perform LA activities	3	3
Students' effort is needed to promote LA	2	2

This theme is concerned with teachers' perceptions of their students' expectation and ability. Three teachers were asked what roles they thought students expected them to play. In contrast to the 'learning facilitator' role that the teachers thought they should be playing (c.f. 6.3.4.1), one teacher believed that students regarded her as 'the provider of knowledge' who 'presents everything students need to know and make sure they focus on important points'. The other two teachers were convinced that students expected them to be advisors who give directions about what to learn and introduce materials. Students also wanted their teachers to be supervisors who assessed their learning progress, according to one of the two teachers.

Extract 6.43

For Vietnamese students, they expect their teachers to present the lessons, highlighting the important points. Rarely have I seen a student who asks related questions which go beyond the content of the lesson or challenges teachers with tricky questions. (Teacher Interview – Ngoc – Q7)

Extract 6.44

I think students expect teachers to tell them what to learn. Students still believe that the role of teachers is to assess students' learning and award marks. They have not changed that belief. Only a few students ask me how to learn better or to find materials for self-study. Most students rely on teachers to impart knowledge to them or give them the material to learn rather than searching for knowledge on their own. (Teacher Interview – Hong – Q7)

When asked about their views on students' ability to learn autonomously, four out of six teachers believed students were not autonomous at the time of the interview. This belief was reflected through comments, such as

Extract 6.45

Students do not have the capacity to control the contents of the lessons. (Teacher interview – Van – Q5).

Extract 6.46

Students wait for teachers to tell them what to learn. (Teacher interview – Hong – Q5).

Extract 6.47

Students do not take the initiative in approaching teachers to ask questions about learning. (Teacher interview – Ngoc – Q5).

Extract 6.48

Students do not have the capacity and confidence to assess their own learning. (Teacher interview – Thanh – Q5).

These comments clearly demonstrate that these teachers assumed that their students still lacked important skills to become more autonomous learners. Although the

teachers were also optimistic about promoting learner autonomy among students and believed this could be successful if students were made aware of learner autonomy and its benefits, they contended that this could only be achieved with teachers' assistance. This belief can be found in the extracts below.

Extract 6.49

Students should be responsible for progress outside class, working harder etc. but I doubt if they can do it without teachers' guidance. (Teacher interview – Van – Q5).

Extract 6.50

Students are not ready to set their own learning objectives. They need support and guidance from teachers. (Teacher interview – Hong – Q5).

In a nutshell, the interviewed teachers believed that students relied on them for guidance and provision of learning skills. They were strongly convinced that they played an important role in promoting learner autonomy among students because they assumed that students lacked the capacity to learn autonomously. They also stressed the importance of students' effort for this promotion to be successful.

6.3.4.3 *Teachers' understanding of learner autonomy*

Table 6.12: Teachers' awareness of learner autonomy (N=6)

Topic	NoM	NoT
Students can do self-study	7	4
Students take the initiative in learning	5	3
Students are motivated	5	3
Students display metacognitive ability	4	2

When asked about what they perceived of learner autonomy, the teachers offered two kinds of answer: 1) what teachers can do to help students learn English better (one teacher); and 2) the qualities students should possess to learn English better (five

teachers). On the whole, these two types of answers can be categorised together under the same themes because the final product of the teachers' assistance was also meant to be students' developing some capacities needed for better learning. Therefore, these qualities were classified into four categories.

Self-study: Four out of six teachers associated self-study with learner autonomy. For these teachers, learner autonomy is synonymous with students' ability to study effectively on their own. In other words, autonomous students were described as proactive students who by themselves sought to widen their knowledge besides what they learned in class, prepared for lessons in advance and completed all assignments. Three of these teachers believed that self-study was the most important factor for success in learning English, not teachers or institutional facilities. The extracts below describe the teachers' view of learner autonomy as the ability for self-study.

Extract 6.51

Autonomy is reflected through the demonstration of the impact of students' self-study on their performance in class. For example, students asked me how to learn vocabulary effectively and I introduced some vocabulary learning methods to them. However, I discovered that some of them had already used good learning methods. They said that they used these methods frequently. That is a good indication of their self-study. (Teacher Interview – Yen – Q5)

Extract 6.52

I think there are two types of self-study: self-study to meet teachers' requirements and self-study for one's own interest. It is still a good thing if students do self-study in accordance with teachers' requirements. However, my aim is to help students discover their interests and their needs and make plan to learn them. Learning for one's interests will be more beneficial than learning to be tested by teachers, to pass a module, or get good marks because these purposes do not have a long-term value. (Teacher Interview – Le – Q5)

Taking the initiative: This quality was considered to be the demonstration of self-study, as stated in the extract below.

Extract 6.53

Q: The first question is ‘How do you understand the concept *learner autonomy*?’

Thanh: In my opinion, it is the students’ ability to study on their own. They take the initiative in their learning. (Teacher Interview – Thanh – Q3)

In the same vein, another interviewed teachers contended that autonomous students take the initiative in carrying out independent learning activities, such as, searching for information to prepare for lessons in advance. This contention is expressed in the following extract.

Extract 6.54

Besides, when I asked students to prepare for the lessons in advance, they searched for Internet articles which are related to the topic of the lessons and used them actively in discussion in class. From these behaviours I know that the students were autonomous and they had taken the initiative to prepare for their lessons in advance without me having to tell them what to do. These students were aware of their responsibility in preparing for the lessons. (Teacher Interview – Yen – Q5)

The conceptualisation of learner autonomy as students’ taking the initiative in the extracts above is in line with the students’ conception of learner autonomy (c.f. 6.2.4.5) and echoes Littlewood’s (1999: 75-6) following definition of reactive autonomy.

This is the kind of autonomy which does not create its own directions but, once a direction has been initiated, enables learners to organise their resources autonomously in order to reach their goal. It is a form of autonomy that stimulates learners 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. Here I will call it *reactive* autonomy. (italic in original)

Littlewood (*ibid.*) argued that reactive autonomy is useful as it can be considered to be “a preliminary step towards proactive autonomy”, i.e., learner autonomy as defined by Holec (1981) and Little (1991), or “a goal in its own right”. In this study, I argue that the teachers’ and students’ conception of learner autonomy has the characteristics of Littlewood’s (1999) reactive autonomy. This assertion will be further discussed in Chapter 8, which provides answers to the research questions raised in this study (see section 8.4.1).

Motivation: Three teachers agreed that learner autonomy enhances motivation. They also saw this as a reciprocal relationship as they stressed that it was the teachers’ responsibility to help students see the link between their efforts and learning outcomes, which they believed would enhance students’ motivation to learn.

Extract 6.55

Q: Before doing the questionnaire, have you ever heard about learner autonomy? How did you perceive it?

Ngoc: I did not read much about learner autonomy. I think it is something like what we do to encourage students to learn better, helping them to see the link between their learning effort and outcomes. (Teacher Interview – Ngoc – Q6)

Extract 6.56

Q: So you said that learner autonomy and motivation are closely related to each other. What is your perception of this relationship?

Hong: What I said was based on my experience because I did not read much about this. Learner autonomy makes students more motivated in learning. When I give students a task, they are required to fulfil it. And in order to do so, they must find their own way. Therefore, naturally they are more motivated in the learning process in class. This can be seen in the speaking and listening and the reading and writing classes. When I gave students a group assignment as homework, they had to work on their own to complete it. When they reported to the class, there were competition between groups and the students became more active in their learning. (Teacher Interview – Hong – Q7)

Metacognitive ability: There are only four occasions on which metacognition was mentioned by two teachers and one of them accounted for three mentions. These teachers believed that learner autonomy means students know what they want, know their strengths and weaknesses, and plan their learning.

Extract 6.57

Q: We've been discussing students' ability to learn on their own. In your opinion, how is this ability demonstrated in students?

Le: First they need to know what they want to learn, which exam they want to sit, what they want to achieve. Then they need to plan their learning. This includes plan the methods of learning, means for learning, such as books or CDs, Internet or with teachers and friends. (Teacher Interview – Le – Q7)

Extract 6.58

Q: In your opinion, what is an autonomous student?

Yen: An autonomous student knows what he wants. He makes plans to achieve it. He also knows what he does well and what he does badly. I think a student needs these qualities to be able to make progress in learning. (Teacher Interview – Yen – Q3)

6.3.4.4 *Teachers' view of learner autonomy in Vietnam*

Table 6.13: Teachers' view of learner autonomy in Vietnam (N=6)

Topic	NoM	NoT
Institutional constraints	12	5
Cultural factors	4	3
Educational methodology	2	1

Talking about promoting learner autonomy in the university classroom, five out of six teachers shared the view that although they wanted to help students become more autonomous, their efforts were restricted mostly by institutional constraints. The institutional constraints were mainly related to the course syllabus. The teachers found that the course syllabus limited their flexibility in teaching because they were

required to cover all the contents in the order it specified. Therefore, they found it difficult to introduce other things, such as learning skills, to the already cramped course syllabus. This also resulted from the little amount of time teachers have available to teaching their course. These difficulties are reflected in the extract below.

Extract 6.59

In the past, I had more time to introduce learning skills to students when we discussed the course outline. Specifically, I asked students to make weekly learning plan and evaluate whether they had reached their target after each week. What they felt when they reached the target. However, at the moment, the ‘on-going’ assessment requirements of the module is so time-consuming that I don’t have much time left to do that in class. Thus I have to abandon it. (Teacher Interview – Yen – Q9)

The course syllabus also limited the teachers’ choices in terms of assessment. The teachers believed that the way students are assessed in the English classroom, as stipulated by the university, is detrimental to the promotion of learner autonomy because the assessment did not encourage students to explore beyond what they were taught in class. In other words, because the dominating form of assessment focused on rote-learning and memorisation, students would only wait for teachers to tell them what was important to learn and then confine themselves to that. Moreover, as the content of assessment is prescribed in the course outline based on the main course book, the teachers expressed their reluctance in allowing students to decide what to learn or choose their own materials. This reluctance is reflected in the extracts below.

Extract 6.60

I think it is difficult to allow students to choose their own learning material because the course outline controls their learning content. Students are also worried that their exam questions were based on the course outline and they would not be able to pass it if they chose their own lessons to learn. (Teacher Interview – Ngoc – Q8)

Extract 6.61

Q: If one day you entered the classroom and asked students what they wanted to learn, how would your students respond?

Hong: They would be very surprised. They must be surprised because it's never been like that. I don't know if this is due to their learning style but it is difficult to do so (asking students what they want to learn) in Vietnam. The reason for this is our educational system is driven by the curriculum. Teachers have to meet the deadline in covering the contents stipulated in the course outline so they cannot afford to allow students to decide what to learn. They are constrained by the course outline. We cannot say that students can learn anything they want as long as they pick up the skills required because we have to follow the course outline. Moreover, the management only uses exam results to measure teachers' performance. This makes it difficult for them to promote learner autonomy by allowing students to choose what they want to learn. (Teacher Interview – Hong – Q7)

It can be seen from Extract 6.59 – Extract 6.61 that the interviewed teachers felt that the rigidity of the course content and assessment stipulated by the course outline has limited their ability to promote learner autonomy in their classroom. They are more concerned about the short-term target, i.e., helping students achieve good results in their exams, than the more long-term objective which is to develop students' ability to take charge of their own learning.

There was only one opinion which raised the issue of lacking a tested model for promoting learner autonomy in university learning environment in Vietnam. According to this teacher, learner autonomy is a new concept to both teachers and students and that promoting it requires a lot more from teacher than their normal teaching. Therefore, this teacher felt that there should be a systematic approach based on a tested model to promote learner autonomy.

Extract 6.62

I think we need a model to guide us if we want to promote learner autonomy in the learning environment in Vietnam. I don't know whether learner autonomy is a completely new trend in Vietnam or if a model has been developed to promote it. If we just promote learner autonomy according to our understanding, the development is scattered and limited to a small scale. (Teacher Interview – Van – Q8)

Culture is also a factor that hinders the promotion of learner autonomy in the context of Vietnam. The same teacher in Extract 6.62 suggested that the large power distance between teachers and students prohibits equal dialogues between them and therefore prevents students from actively discussing learning with their teachers. This finding lends itself to the proposition about the implications of Hofstede and Hofstede's (2005) 'power distance' dimension in education in a Confucian Heritage Culture like Vietnam (c.f. section 1.4.1).

Extract 6.63

Van: Our culture also has an influence on learner autonomy.

Q: Could you tell me how culture affects learner autonomy?

Van: Take, power distance, for example. There is a difference in the status between the teacher and students. The teacher cannot be completely liberal and open to students in everything, such as students' independence and teacher-student discussion. Culture influences the balance of power in teacher-student discussion. (Teacher Interview – Van – Q9)

Another cultural factor is the conception that teachers should always have the answer to questions about the subject they are teaching. This expectation comes not only from students but also from teachers themselves. Teachers consider themselves to be the expert in the field. As a result, they are reluctant to allow students to decide the content of the lesson for fear that students may ask for something they are not prepared for. The following extracts will elaborate on this cultural issue.

Extract 6.64

In the Vietnamese learning context, it is difficult to allow students to decide what to learn, how long they want to spend and which material to use, like the process you have introduced to me. Teachers might react to this and say that if they let students do all these things, then students can do the teaching as well and do not need to go to class. Therefore, culture can be a factor to consider in this case. (Teacher Interview – Hong – Q8)

Extract 6.65

The thing I have never seen is students choosing their own learning material to bring to class and asking the teacher to use them to teach. I doubt if the teacher would be willing to teach something they have not prepared for. Maybe they are not confident enough or they have not done homework on the topic. Besides, my students have never asked to choose the lessons to learn, even if they are in their prescribed course books. (Teacher Interview – Le – Q7)

This cultural factor may result in an educational approach which discourages learners from actively seeking knowledge on their own. According to a teacher, students had become inactive because of the way they were educated in lower levels. She posited that students were used to relying on teachers for new knowledge rather than finding out new things on their own. The following extract provides an insight into this problem.

Extract 6.66

Q: You commented that students rarely raised questions. What do you think were the reasons?

Thanh: They didn't raise questions because they hadn't prepared for lessons in advance. For example, even hard-working students only completed assigned exercise rather than looking to find out more about what they had learned. If they had tried to learn more about something, they would have had questions; or they could have accepted what teachers told them, but they would have had queries when they did the homework. However, the common mentality, or rather the way they had been trained from primary school to high school, is that to complete assigned homework correctly is good enough. In the Vietnamese method of teaching, students aren't geared towards raising questions

and finding out more about something by themselves. For instance, new lessons are for teachers to teach, not for students to read in advance and raise questions to clarify confusing points. For Vietnamese students, they only need to learn already taught lessons and depend on teachers for teaching them new lessons. Therefore, they don't need to ask questions. (Teacher Interview – Thanh – Q 6)

6.3.4.5 Teachers' practice in promoting learner autonomy

Table 6.14: Teachers' practice in promoting learner autonomy (N=6)

Topic	NoM	NoT
How to promote learner autonomy	12	6
Assessment of their own teaching	3	1

Four out of six teachers affirmed that promoting learner autonomy is important to students' progress in learning, although their comments in the previous theme reveal considerable context-related difficulties in doing this. When asked whether they thought their teaching encouraged learner autonomy among students, only one teacher asserted that her practice supported learner autonomy because she “showed students how to learn” in her teaching (c.f. Extract 6.67). This teacher also expressed that she was willing to give students more control in the classroom and stressed that students needed to discover the subject by themselves and learn from other sources.

Extract 6.67

Q: Do you think that your teaching method helps students develop learner autonomy?

Ngoc: I think it helps them a lot. I help students go through the process of planning, implementing and evaluating. So students can reflect on their learning and restart the process to address their weak points. This will also allow them to make progress in other courses. (Teacher Interview – Ngoc – Q10)

In terms of methods to promote learner autonomy, a third of the opinions (four out of twelve) were about giving students assignments that encouraged them to read the course book in advance and work in groups to answer the questions.

Extract 6.68

Q: Which learning activities do you think can develop learner autonomy for students?

Van: If we want students to be more active in learning, we should give them assignments. Students need to be given assignments to encourage them to work harder and read more materials at home. (Teacher Interview – Van – Q8)

In order for this method to work, teachers (three out of twelve opinions) also offered bonus marks for students who had prepared for lessons.

Extract 6.69

Perhaps most courses at the University have the amount of self-study time stipulated in the course outlines. This is reserved for assignments because without them we cannot be certain if students do their self-study. These assignments can be simple. For example, students can be asked to find an English story or song every week and write a reflection on it. Teachers will collect and mark their paper. This should be optional, i.e., if students do the assignments, they have bonus mark. By doing this, I know whether students do self-study. (Teacher Interview – Le – Q7)

Besides, one opinion emphasised the role of teachers in monitoring because students would not be motivated to do homework unless their work were checked regularly.

Extract 6.70

I ask students to do home assignments and raise questions in class if they find anything confusing. I tell them that if they did not ask questions, I would assume that they have understood everything and I would give them a test. In fact, there would be something that students did not fully understand and this makes them ask questions. They have to ask questions because if they don't they won't be able to do the test. That seems compulsory so we cannot say it is learner autonomy. However, that is one of the way I use to create a motivation for students to do self-study. (Teacher Interview – Thanh – Q9)

Extracts 6.66 – 6.68 reveals a paradox in the way teachers attempt to encourage students to take greater responsibility in tertiary education in Vietnam. The interviewed teachers wanted their students to put in more effort on self-study. They

believed that students should take initiative in acquiring knowledge on their own (see section 6.3.4.3). On the other hand, they had to enforce this by giving students assignments and monitoring their learning. As pointed out in Extract 6.66, these methods are compulsory and should not be regarded as pro-autonomy. However, in the context of this study, a certain level of teacher control might be preferable for both students and teachers (see sections 6.2.4.3 and 6.3.4.6) to develop the self-study habit and raise awareness about independent learning for students before asking them to take greater responsibility for their own learning. The necessity of making students aware of the importance of self-study and the role of teachers in showing students how to learn are expressed in two extracts below.

Extract 6.71

At first, we need to make students aware of the importance of self-study. Once they have this awareness, they will actively search for knowledge on their own. Secondly, we need to show students that each subject requires different learning skills and approaches, but the most important factor is the students themselves. They need to answer some common questions, such as what they want to learn, what they have learned and understood in that subject area, what else they need to learn. They should know that they can even decide whether or not a lesson is important to them. (Teacher Interview – Thanh – Q10)

Extract 6.72

Q: So in your opinion, learner autonomy means students engaging in self-study and realising the link between their effort, planning and success in learning. Do you consider promoting learner autonomy to be an important objective in your teaching?

Ngoc: Very important. I'm always asking myself how to motivate students to make them know that they need to make effort and help them plan their learning. I think in class, teachers can only show their students the direction in the quest for knowledge, which students need to go on their own. Teachers have the role to ensure that students are taking the right direction. (Teacher Interview – Ngoc – Q9)

In conclusion, the interviewed teachers were aware of the need to promote learner autonomy in language teaching because they believed it contributed to students' progress in learning. In order to do this, three teachers suggested that students should be given assignments to learn on their own. In this case, teachers would enforce self-study by checking students' homework and offering bonus marks if they complete their assignments. This could be considered as the initial step to encourage students to explore the lessons on their own. However, as expressed by two teachers, students also need to be made aware of the importance of their responsibility for making effort and taking the initiative in learning. In this case, the teachers could provide guidance and show the students the direction so that they can set about learning on their own.

6.3.4.6 *Teachers' perceptions of control in the classroom*

Table 6.15: Teachers' perceptions of control in the classroom (N=6)

Topic	NoM	NoT
Teachers' control of classroom activities	8	3
Students' control of classroom activities	3	1

As for control in the English language classroom, most opinions were predominantly about teachers' control. Two teachers suggested that the level of control they allowed students to take would depend on the ability of the class. In other words, if they found their students to be active and competent enough, they would give them more control.

Extract 6.73

Q: As for control in the classroom, do you think teachers should control all activities in the classroom?

Ngoc: No, I don't think so. I think it depends on the students. If students are proactive, the control belongs to them, not the teacher. Teachers only play the role of a coordinator, orchestrating the activities. For inactive students, teachers have to control everything. (Teacher Interview – Ngoc – Q11)

The control that teachers offer students can be in terms of discussion time, content of the lesson and response to teachers' questions, as described in the extract below.

Extract 6.74

“Q: So when you say that students take control and teachers only play the role of a coordinator, what can students control?”

Ngoc: They can control the amount of time devoted to discussion or their feedback about the discussion to the teacher. For inactive students, it is completely different. For example, students wait for their teacher to tell them what to say or to ask them to report on their discussion. If they don't understand something, they will only keep that for themselves.

Q: Ok, so students mostly control time?

Ngoc: The content as well. They control the content of the discussion, develop it and make interesting and unexpected questions about related topics. As for inactive students, they will only confine themselves within the lesson. (Teacher Interview – Ngoc – Q12, 13)

On the other hand, these teachers argued that it is necessary to maintain a greater level of teachers' control because of reasons, such as time constraint, requirements from course outline and cultural factors as I have discussed in section 6.3.4.4. The cultural and traditional factor can also be found in the following extract.

Extract 6.75

I think control in the classroom has something to do with tradition. I mean the predominant teaching practice in our country. I think teachers still keep a lot of control. This is related to the relation between teachers and students. To students, teachers play the role of a 'knowledge provider' and that's a tradition. Therefore they need to take control of activities in class. However, we are trying to adopt a learner-centred approach in teaching. In this case, if teachers control everything, it is not learner-centred. There are some reasons why teachers still control. For example, it depends on the students' ability. A class with students of good ability will require changes in teachers' control. However, with students of low ability, teachers can only encourage them to be more active in learning without expecting them to take more control. (Teacher Interview – Van – Q9)

6.3.5 Conclusions on teachers' perception of their roles in promoting learner autonomy

The qualitative data collected from teacher interviews at the University have added a complement aspect to the picture of learner autonomy in Vietnam from an alternative viewpoint. The data have revealed how teachers perceived their roles and responsibilities, and students' expectation and ability to be. The analysis of these data has also offered insights into the teachers' views of learner autonomy and what they do to promote it in the Vietnamese tertiary education context.

Regarding teachers' perceptions of their roles and responsibilities, the interviewed teachers maintain that they see themselves as 'learning facilitators' who, with their expertise in the field, help students to search for knowledge. However, the teachers realised that in reality they cannot keep to this role all the time because they were convinced that their students were not ready for or capable of operating on their own without the help of teachers.

The teachers confirm the importance of promoting learner autonomy among students for effective learning. They also expressed their understanding of the concept of learner autonomy and mentioned their approaches and practices to helping students become more autonomous learners. However, they felt that their efforts were hindered by obstacles, such as the course outline, cultural issues, and the dominant teaching/learning methods influencing students' earlier educational experiences.

6.4 Conclusion

The analysis of qualitative data in this chapter has brought forward three important themes which can be found common between students and teachers. These themes are issues related to: 1) students' motivation and expectations vs. teachers' perceptions of

their own roles in language teaching, 2) students' and teachers' awareness of learner autonomy and their perceptions of promoting learner autonomy, and 3) challenges to promoting learner autonomy in a Vietnamese university. These themes will be summarised in this section.

6.4.1 Students' motivation and expectations vs. teachers' perceptions of their own roles in language teaching

The student focus groups reveal that most intervention and non-intervention students enjoy learning English and are motivated by success in learning the language. This intrinsic motivation is considered to be a good condition for promoting learner autonomy (Dickinson, 1995; Ushioda, 1996). The focus groups also point out that students can be motivated by learning tasks that require them to work together and that stretch their level to a certain extent. This preference is cogently expressed by the intervention groups who claim that their interest in learning is increased when they are given challenging assignments that allow them to work independently of the teachers and apply their skills in practice.

Although the students in the focus groups claim that their interest in learning is increased when working independently of the teachers, they are in disagreement about teachers' control of their learning process. Some of them are against the teachers' involvement in deciding what students should learn. They believe that they should take responsibility for choosing what they want to learn and this control brings them motivation. On the contrary, others acknowledge their lack of self-discipline and see teachers' constant monitoring as a way to help them overcome their laziness.

Concerning the teachers' responsibilities in the language classroom, the students believe that teachers need to provide them with guidance, create opportunities for

them to practise and press them to learn. The findings from the focus groups in this phase reveal the complexity of and conflicts in the students' expectations of how teachers can assist them in the English language learning process. These conflicts can be argued to be related to Hofstede and Hofstede's (2005) distinction between 'the desirable' and 'the desired'. Specifically, as far as the students are concerned, it is desirable that teachers give them the freedom to control their learning process so they can learn independently of the teachers. They strongly believe that at the university level, teachers should not be the 'conveyor of knowledge' but the 'learning facilitator' who provides guidance and learning skills in a systematic way to help students explore and learn the language by themselves. However, what the students actually need is teachers' involvement in giving them directions, learning strategies and monitoring their learning progress.

The findings from teacher interviews suggest that, to some extent, teachers have the same ideas as students about teachers being the guides and facilitators to assist students in learning. They believe that the fundamental aim of teaching is to inspire students and enable them to seek for and obtain knowledge by themselves. However, the interviews also indicate that the teachers assume that their students still lack important skills to become more autonomous learners. This finding is in line with the findings of the PLAQ, which reveal that teachers do not highly rate their students' ability to make learning decisions that demonstrate the capacity for learner autonomy (see section 5.6.3 and 5.7.2). Therefore, the teachers believe that students rely on them for guidance and provision of learning skills to be able to take greater responsibility for their own learning.

6.4.2 Students' and teachers' awareness of learner autonomy and their perceptions of promoting learner autonomy

Although the students demonstrate various levels of understanding of learner autonomy, the concept is most commonly understood as 'taking the initiative' in learning. In this way, autonomous students are considered to be proactive and well-prepared learners. Additionally, the students in the focus groups also mention the ability to learn on one's own as a quality of autonomous learners. The interviewed teachers have the same view as the focus group students about what autonomous learning means. These teachers associate learner autonomy with students' ability to learn effectively on their own. In this view, autonomous students prepare for lessons in advance, complete all assignments, and proactively seek to widen their knowledge. In line with the findings of the PLAQ (c.f. section 5.6.5), the interviewed teachers believe that learner autonomy, which they see as self-study, is the most important factor for success in learning English. They also believed that learner autonomy can enhance students' motivation by helping them to see the causal relationship between learning effort and learning outcomes.

The revelation of the students' awareness of learner autonomy sheds light on the identification of their preferences for autonomous learning. In other words, the students' efforts to learn autonomously are demonstrated by the different ways of taking the initiative in learning they recommended, such as, speaking English in class or preparing for lessons by reading materials in advance. Nevertheless, it is important that students develop the awareness of their own roles and responsibilities as the main agent who has the power and means to direct one's own learning.

Although learner autonomy is commonly conceptualised as self-study and taking the initiative by teachers and students, there are opinions which highlight the importance of the metacognitive aspects of learner autonomy. One student suggests that autonomous learning requires a systematic approach to learning which includes setting objectives, making learning plans and choosing learning methods. There are also comments which reflect students' confidence and willingness to make learning decisions, such as deciding what and how to learn, setting learning objectives, and creating opportunities for practice. As for the teachers, only a few of their comments suggest that learner autonomy means students know what they want, know their strengths and weaknesses, and plan their learning.

The teachers' conceptions of learner autonomy clearly define the way they go about promoting learner autonomy among their students. According to them, learner autonomy can be promoted in the language classroom by assignments given to students to encourage them to read the course materials in advance and work in groups to answer the questions. This conception is illustrated by the findings of the PLAQ, which reveal that teachers prefer to use teaching activities that allow students to work independently of them instead of seeking to develop students' capacity by enhancing their metacognitive knowledge or giving them more control of the learning process (see section 5.6.5).

6.4.3 Challenges to promoting learner autonomy in a Vietnamese university

When discussing the roles of teachers in the English classroom, both the students and teachers seem to believe that teachers being the 'learning facilitators' is the way it should be in tertiary education. However, the reality is different. As for the students, many of them feel that they need more freedom in learning and want their teachers to

take a hands-off approach. By contrast, though teachers may express that they are willing to give students more control, they cannot do so for two main reasons. First, teachers are constrained by the course outlines which stipulate the content of the course and the form of assessment. This leads to limitations in the amount of time available to teachers and the wash-back effect on students. As a result, teachers could not include learning skills in their syllabus nor encourage students to explore beyond what they have in the course book because of not only time limits but also assessment pressure. The second reason is that teachers do not feel that their students are ready for autonomous learning. Opinions expressed by teachers reflect that they are concerned about students' lack of learning skills and ability to manage their own learning. These concerns are verified by the students' reliance on teachers for guidance, learning methods and pressure for learning.

Although the teachers' reasons for not being able to promote learner autonomy in the English language classroom at the university, even if they wanted to, are valid ones, I find that their awareness of what learner autonomy constitutes and their attitudes towards students' ability are the biggest barriers to learner autonomy in Vietnamese tertiary education context. First, as they mainly conceptualise learner autonomy as self-study and students' taking the initiative, the teachers tend to focus on teaching and learning activities that allow students to work independently and believe that this will develop learner autonomy (c.f. 5.7.4 and 6.3.4.5). Despite mentioning the need to provide students with learning skills, the teachers in this study failed to recognise the importance of metacognitive knowledge about English language learning in fostering learner autonomy. Hence, they did not seek to develop students' capacity in this respect. Secondly, the teachers' lack of confidence in students' ability, as discussed above, supports their authoritarian view of their roles in the English language

classroom and prevents them from seeking ways to allow students to have more control of the learning process. This problem is compounded by the large power distance between teachers and student and the pressure created by the curriculum and Vietnamese culture. Nevertheless, I believe that an integrated learner training programme using the teacher-guided/learner-decided approach as suggested in this study can be the way to overcome those barriers to learner autonomy in Vietnam. This topic will be discussed further in Chapter 8.

CHAPTER 7. PHASE THREE - QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of the data I collected in the third phase of the study. This was the final phase of the intervention programme that I conducted at the University. The data come from three sources, i.e., learning contracts, learning diaries, and student interviews and were collected during and at the end of the ILTP. The analysis of these data reveals the students' responses to the intervention and the impacts it has made on their learning process. Following the outline set in the previous chapters, I shall first describe how data were processed and analysed. Then I shall present findings of the analysis in the forms of emerging themes or ranking-tables. Finally I shall attempt to evaluate the influence of the ILTP on the promotion of learner autonomy among the intervention students.

7.2 Learning contracts and learning diaries

As I have mentioned in section 3.11.4.5, the students enrolling in the intervention class were required to prepare and sign a learning contract with the teacher. The learning contract was an agreement between the teacher and the students about their self-regulated learning. It contained students' learning objectives which they set for their self-study in the semester, self-regulated learning activities to achieve the objectives, a proposed weekly learning schedule, and expected evidence of learning. During the time the students were taking the course, they were also asked to keep a learning diary to keep a record of their implementation of the learning plan stipulated in their learning contract. At the end of the course, the students handed in the learning

diary, evidence of self-study, and the learning contract to the teacher. Twenty-eight students submitted their learning contracts and/or learning diaries.

7.2.1 Data management and coding

As for the learning contracts and learning diaries that the students submitted, the identity of the students was coded to ensure the anonymity of the students. In particular, each student's learning contract and learning diary were given a coded name on the first page. A sample code is "Learning Contract/Diary – Thien – P4", which indicates that the data is on page 4 of the learning contract/diary of a student whose pseudonym is Thien.

7.2.2 Data analysis

To analyse the students' learning contracts and learning diaries, I adapted Lai (2001)'s analytical measurement scales to assess students' performance in carrying out self-directed learning according to their learning contracts. According to Lai (2001), there are two levels of operation in learner autonomy, namely macro and micro level. The macro level is related to self-direction which is defined by learners' ability to organise or manage their own learning process (Dickinson, 1987; Holec, 1996; Lai, 2001). This is demonstrated by learners' ability to set realistic goals for their learning, identify scope of learning, select relevant materials and learning activities, set suitable pace for learning, monitor and conduct self-assessment (Lai, 2001). At the macro level, analysing learning contracts enabled me to evaluate students' capacity in planning their learning for an extended period of time during the intervention semester. Specifically, I focused on finding whether the students were able to set specific and realistic learning objectives and make learning plans with specific and relevant learning activities and learning materials. However, because the

students only prepared their learning contracts in the first two weeks of the intervention with the guidance of the teacher, I decided not to use Lai (2001)'s elaborate seven-point rating scale (see APPENDIX V) but developed a simpler instrument for my purpose (see APPENDIX W). The instrument I developed was a checklist which contained 2 parts: 'Objectives' and 'Action plan'. The former determined whether the students' objectives were 'vague', 'general but acceptable', or 'specific and realistic' while the latter rated the learning plan as 'vague', including 'some specific activities', and including 'specific activities and relevant materials'. This shorter instrument allowed me to have an overview of the students' ability to plan their learning for a prolonged period of time.

The micro level refers to process control, i.e., "the learners' ability to self-monitor and self-evaluate her learning tasks and/or learning strategies employed for each learning activity" (Lai, 2001: 35). In this study, the students' ability to control the learning process was explored through the columns in their learning diaries because they described how the students chose learning activities, set aims for the tasks, identified their problems when carrying out the tasks, selected and adjusted learning strategies, and evaluated the learning process. The analysis of students' learning diaries allowed me to find concrete evidence about students' manifestation of learner autonomy in their actual learning process. Lai's (2001) rating scale only evaluated the 'Task aims' and 'Self-assessment' columns in students' learning diaries. He argued that the 'Content summary' column could be excluded from evaluation because comprehension ability was not the focus of his study. As for 'Problems' and 'Strategies', these columns were excluded from evaluation because their inputs were influenced by uncontrollable variables, such as the difficulty level and individual student's competence in understanding. However, as learning strategies played an

important part of the content of the intervention programme, I decided that the students' use of learning strategies should also be evaluated because it constituted the students' ability to take charge in their own learning. Therefore, in this study I added two items evaluating students' use of learning strategies to Lai (2001)'s four-item rating scale (see APPENDIX X). These two items, which were based on criteria used in Lai's evaluation scale for evaluating self-direction, are as follows

- The strategies are specific and relevant to the learning activity;
- The strategies chosen are conducive to the obtainment of the task aims.

This scale was used in order to gather quantitative evidence about the students' metacognitive knowledge about the learning process demonstrated in their capacity for monitoring and reflecting on their own learning. As the learning diaries were in the form of tables, the students tended to fill in the cells with brief information about their learning process. Therefore, the use of a rating scale was believed to be appropriate for the data. Moreover, the quantitative evidence collected by this scale was supplemented by qualitative data collected by student interviews which will be discussed later in this Chapter (see section 7.3).

7.2.3 Discussion and Comments

7.2.3.1 Learning contract

Using the criteria discussed in the previous section, I rated students' learning contract to evaluate their capacity in setting learning objectives and planning their learning.

Table 7.1 shows the results of this evaluation.

Table 7.1: Rating of students' learning contracts (N=25)

Objectives			Action plan		
Vague	General but acceptable	Specific and realistic	Vague	Some specific activities	Specific activities and relevant materials
7	7	11	7	8	10

In terms of learning objectives, 11 out of 25 students in the intervention group were judged to have set specific and realistic goals for the semester. These students were able to clarify what they wanted to achieve through self-study in concrete terms. In other words, their objectives contained quantifiable and/or clearly defined targets which were achievable within the period of the semester. Here are some examples of the students' objectives.

Extract 7.1

“- Writing: be able to write a complete paragraph” (Learning Contract – Anh – P1)

Extract 7.2

“- Get 8 in my ‘Writing’ & ‘Reading and Grammar 3’ classes

- Take the TOEIC test and get 650 scores (*sic*)” (Learning Contract – Thien – P1)

Extract 7.3

“- Learn new words & make sentences with the new words

- Write a paragraph (200 words) using new words”. (Learning Contract – Bao – P1)

Although the objectives set by the students in these examples were considered to be specific and realistic, they can still be improved to become more explicit. For instance, in Extract 7.1, the student set the learning goal for improving her writing to be able to write a complete paragraph. However, she could have been more specific about this objective by defining what she meant by this. In fact, her objective came from the subject ‘Writing’ she was taking, where a complete paragraph was defined as having a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence. Similarly, the objective stated in Extract 7.3 could have been specified as to the number of new words the student wanted to use in the paragraph.

Seven students set more general objectives but these were deemed acceptable thanks to the use of modifiers to indicate the level of competence students wanted to attain for the language skill they set to learn (e.g., Extract 7.4 and Extract 7.5), or to the identification of a specific element of the aspect of language learning to improve (i.e., ‘listen to the main idea’ as in Extract 7.6). Following are some examples.

Extract 7.4

- Speak English more fluently
- Learn more vocabulary (Learning Contract – Ngan – P1)

Extract 7.5

- Listening and taking notes more precisely.
- Expanding my vocabulary (Learning Contract – Truong – P1)

Extract 7.6

- I will able (*sic*) to speak clearly, fluently
- I will able to listen and understand the main idea (Learning Contract – Thai – P1)

A considerable number of students (seven out of 25) only described their learning objectives using vague language, such as “Improve listening” or “Reading”. These objectives failed to specify what aspects of the skill students wanted to improve or how much improvement students wanted to achieve.

Although the students were classified into three different groups according to the rating of the formulation of their learning objectives, it should be noted that even students who are in the ‘specific and realistic objectives’ category did have some objectives that could be rated as ‘too general’. On the whole, less than half of the students (11 out of 25) were able to produce a learning contract which had most objectives clearly defined and quantified. The majority of students (14 out of 25)

would need more guidance to be able to set more specific learning objectives. In fact, although the students had been introduced to SMART objectives (see 4.5.2) it seemed rather unrealistic to expect them to be able to set good objectives at the beginning of the ILTP. These students would need to go through a contract cycle or more, and develop the capacity for reflection in learning before being able to produce a better learning contract.

As for the students' action plan, ten students were able to produce a learning plan with specific activities and listed relevant materials for them. These students designed their activities carefully, taking into account the learning objectives, the amount of time available, and their own ability.

Extract 7.7

Objectives: improve listening and writing skills.

Action: Look for useful websites, such as BBC, VOA news. Write down key words and try to make a sentence. Summarise the news based on key words. Choose two words that are interesting to me and make a paragraph at the end of the week. (Learning Contract – Thuy – P1)

Extract 7.8

Objectives: Practise speaking English with friends twice a week

Action: Speak English with Vietnamese friends as much as possible during break time in class (Learning Contract – Bao – P1)

Extract 7.9

Objectives: Improve speaking skill

Action: read news then try to summarise in my own words. Choose a topic to talk (Learning Contract – Le – P1)

Eight other students also managed to plan some specific learning activities as discussed above. However, in many instances they failed to come up with a concrete

plan of action to achieve their learning objectives. This is also the problem which abounds in the learning contracts of seven students in the “Vague action plan” category.

Extract 7.10

Objectives: Improve listening skill

Action: Listen to CD, Internet, TV (Learning Contract – Tran – P1)

Extract 7.11

Objectives: Speaking

Action: More practice (Learning Contract – Trinh – P1)

On the whole only six out of twenty-five students designed a good learning contract which contains specific and realistic objectives and specific learning activities with relevant materials to achieve those objectives. Three students completely failed to put together concrete learning goals and activities in their contracts. Two of these students were in the lower half of the final test result table. The other, while achieving good results in the module, might not have found the contract useful and had done it just because it was a required component of the subject.

With an aim to develop students’ ability to make plans for their learning, the learning contract was introduced to provide students with a useful tool to set learning objectives and devise an action plan to achieve them. The learning contract also served as a source of motivation for self-regulated learning because the objectives were set by the students based on their learning needs and it represented a promise of the students to the teacher. As for the purpose of the study, the learning contract is considered to be a point of reference in assessing the students’ readiness for autonomy in terms of their metacognitive knowledge about the learning process.

Although this study did not intend to measure the development of the students' capacity to make learning plans by comparing learning contracts made at the beginning and the end of the training programme, the effect of the use of learning contract in fostering learner autonomy in English language learning from the students' point of view will be explored through students' interviews (see section 7.3).

7.2.3.2 Learning diaries

The learning diaries submitted by students illustrated how they implemented their learning plan in their day-to-day learning activities. These diaries allowed me to investigate the students' development of learner autonomy at the micro level (Lai, 2001). Table 7.2 below displays the statistical results produced by the use of the adapted measurement scale discussed in 7.2.2 to rate students' learning diary entries. These results were obtained from the rating of 91 diary entries of 25 students on a five-point scale from 0 to 4. This scale was constructed to determine the degree to which each rating statement reflected each item recorded in the learning diary entries. The points on this scale represents various degree of relevance with 1 at the lowest end and 4 the highest of the scale. 0 refers to cases of nil answers or descriptions which are totally irrelevant (Lai, 2001).

Table 7.2: Rating of students' learning diaries (N=25)

N= 25	Aims		Strategies		Self-assessment	
	Realistic	Specific and relevant	Specific and relevant	Effective	Relevant to aims	Relevant to learning process
Mean	2.68	2.63	3.00	2.99	2.27	2.42
SD	0.88	1.01	0.56	0.58	0.93	1.11

It can be seen from Table 7.2 that the highest rated factor of students' learning diary is their use of learning strategies while the lowest is their self-assessment. The high score for strategy use is not surprising because the students were introduced to various techniques for learning English skills during the course of the intervention. Through the diaries, the students demonstrated that they were able to apply effectively the strategies that they had been taught into their own learning. This finding is also in line with the finding of student interviews in section 7.3.4.4, which exhibit a wide range of learning strategies used by the students in their self-study.

As a matter of fact, the findings from students' learning diaries are supported by the findings of the RFAQ presented in Table 5.8 and Table 5.10. Specifically, the order of the rating results of goal-setting, using strategies, and self-assessment is consistent between the two instruments. In Table 7.2, the two components of 'Strategies' get the highest mean score, followed by those of 'Aims' and 'Self-assessment'. Similarly, in Table 5.8 and Table 5.10, the order of the mean scores of the items in the post-intervention group is 'I try new ways/strategies of learning English' (3.9), 'I can set my own learning goals' (3.67), and 'I am able to measure my progress' (3.24).

Apart from the statistical results, a closer look into the entries of the students' learning diaries allows us to have a more balanced and informed understanding of how the students engage in autonomous learning at the micro level. The following are some examples to illustrate how the students employ learning strategies in their learning.

Extract 7.12

Date/ time	Activity	Task aims	Brief content summary	<i>Strategies</i>
Week 10: 15/11 - 21/11/2010	Do reading comprehension practice test – Actual test 1	Improve reading skill, vocabulary and grammar	Answer 100 reading comprehension questions in TOEIC test	<i>Answer 100 questions within the time allowed without using a dictionary.</i> <i>Check the answer key</i> <i>Take note the numbers of incorrect answers</i> <i>See why some answer are wrong</i> <i>Look up & study new words</i>

(Learning Diary – Le – P1)

Extract 7.13

Date/ time	Activity	Task aims	Brief content summary	<i>Strategies</i>
Week 9: 8/11 – 12/11/2010	Listening to news on www.voanews.com	Understand the content and focus on pronunciation and intonation of speakers	The content was about new mobile phone system helping people to control their blood pressure by collecting blood pressure readings from home testing devices.	<i>Write down main ideas in a draft so that I can collect information</i> <i>Try to guess what they are talking about by making some questions in my mind</i> <i>Be comfortable to listen easily</i> <i>Don't focus much on new words when listening</i> <i>Find out new words and learn.</i>

(Learning Diary – Thuy – P1)

The examples given above clearly show that the students were able to employ a wide range of learning strategies to facilitate their learning process. These strategies include cognitive ones, such as trying to answer 100 questions within the time allowed without using a dictionary (Extract 7.12), writing down main ideas (Extract

7.13); metacognitive strategies, such as seeing why some answers are wrong (Extract 7.12); compensatory strategies, such as trying to guess what is being talked about by making some questions in one's mind (Extract 7.13); and affective strategies, such as making oneself comfortable to listen easily (Extract 7.13) (Oxford, 1990). Besides being varied, the learning strategies used by the students above were also found to be relevant to the language skills they were learning and conducive to the improvement of those skills.

In contrast to the use of learning strategies, self-assessment got the lowest mean score among the three investigated areas in the students' learning diary. This resulted from the fact that seven out of twenty-seven students got a combined mean score of less than 4.00 for the two components of self-assessment. The reason for this low score is because these students failed to take into account the extent to which they had fulfilled their aims and to evaluate their learning process. Therefore, their assessment was general and simplistic, using only some generic expressions, such as 'rather good', 'effective', and 'done'. Below are two examples of students' learning diaries.

Extract 7.14

Date/ time	Activity	Task aims	Strategies	<i>Self- assessment</i>
Week 7: 26/10/2010	1. Listen the song 'The love will find a way' 2. Grammar in use: read unit 1 'Present continuous' and do exercise	Practise listening and grammar skills	Pay attention, try to understand the lyrics. After understanding the lyrics, listen again (many times) Learn the song by heart	Ok

(Learning Diary – Thu – P1)

Extract 7.15

Date/ time	Activity	Task aims	Strategies	<i>Self- assessment</i>
Week 11: 23/11/2010	Watch movie 'Scott Pilgrim vs. The World'	Understand 80% - 90% without subtitle	Re-watched the movie with English subtitle	<i>Understood the whole movie.</i>

(Learning Diary – Minh – P2)

In the first example above, the student used only one word, i.e., 'Ok', to assess her learning (Extract 7.14). This assessment was neither relevant to the aims of the learning activity nor explicit enough for the student to reflect on her learning process. In the second example, like the first one the assessment was not useful for the student to review the learning process, although it did address the task aims (Extract 7.15).

Among the three areas that were evaluated, the scores of Task aim were the middle values. Nevertheless, it can be argued that the ability to set realistic, specific and relevant task aims is instrumental to the effectiveness of learning strategies and the relevance of self-assessment. Following is an example of a learning diary entry where the student had a grasp of the specific aims of the learning activities she engaged in doing.

Extract 7.16

Date/ time	Activity	<i>Task aims</i>	Strategies	Self-assessment
Week 7: 29/10/2010	1. Listen to Lecture ready – Unit 1 2. Practise note-taking from TOEFL iBT listening test	<i>Recognise topic and plan of the lecture</i> <i>Improve writing speed</i> <i>Practise noting down only important information</i> <i>Organise notes by outlining</i>	Abbreviate repeated words Write main ideas near the margin, indent supporting ideas and example Listen to the lecture two or three times to add information that was missed at the first listen	Be able to recognise lecture topics and plans Note down enough information to answer the required questions Be able to catch up with lecture in some extends.

(Learning Diary – Lam – P2)

As illustrated in Extract 7.16 above, although the task aims might have been prescribed by the text book the student was using, it is more important that the student was aware of the purposes of the learning activities in terms of their benefits in skill development and knowledge enrichment. This awareness enabled her to select suitable and effective learning strategies and reflect on her learning process later on in her assessment. Specifically, despite her failure to use the simple past tense to assess learning, the student addressed three out of four task aims when she judged that she was able to recognise the topic and the plan of the lecture, took note of adequate information to answer comprehension questions, and coped well with the pace of the lecture.

7.3 Students' interviews

Besides submitting the learning contracts and/or learning diaries at the end of the semester, the students were also invited to attend individual interview sessions to

discuss their learning experience. Twenty-five students attended the interviews. The students were asked to talk about the objectives that they had set and the learning activities they had been carrying out to achieve their goals. They were also asked to assess their learning and the results of making a learning contract and keeping a diary.

7.3.1 Data management and coding

The interviews were in English and audio recorded with the consent of all twenty five students. After the sessions I transcribed the audio files using Microsoft Word. This allowed the text files produced to be formatted in accordance with the requirements of the qualitative data analysis software. The recordings were transcribed verbatim and no corrections were made to the students' language.

In order to conform to ethical regulations about confidentiality, the identity of the student in each transcript was coded. A sample code is "Student Interview – Thien – Q2", which indicates that the data is the response to question 2 in the interview with a student whose pseudonym is Thien. The textual data with coded participant information were then imported to Nvivo for data analysis.

7.3.2 Data analysis

Unlike the analysis of data from student focus groups and teacher interviews where I freely searched for themes embedded in the rich data, I had a list of topics which defined what I looked for in the data from student interviews. Particularly, I was interested in finding out the students' perceptions about whether or not using a learning contract and diary in learning was useful, their assessment of their own learning, their difficulties in carrying out the learning contract, and whether they wanted to use these in their future learning. Therefore, the five-step analysis described in section 6.2.2 was modified as follows.

- First, I went through each transcript and picked out details related to the questions I wanted to answer and coded them into tree nodes in Nvivo.
- Then, I reviewed each tree nodes to further categorise the details into sub-categories, i.e., sub-tree nodes.
- Finally, I read through the transcripts again to identify and include more details of the topics contained in the tree nodes. (see APPENDIX Y)

7.3.3 Overview of emerging themes

The process of data analysis with Nvivo yielded six main themes. These themes are ranked in descending order according to the number of mentions and presented in the table below.

Table 7.3: Emerging themes from student interviews (N=25)

	Theme	Number of mentions
1	Learning objectives	58
2	Assessment of the effectiveness of using learning contract and learning diary	34
3	Future use of learning contract and learning diary	23
4	Students' self-assessment	14
5	Learning strategies	14
6	Difficulties in implementing the learning contract and writing the learning diary	11

7.3.4 Discussion and Comments

7.3.4.1 Learning objectives

Table 7.4: Students' learning objectives (N=25)

	Topic	NoM	NoS
1	Listening	22	22
2	Speaking	12	12
3	Reading	8	8
4	Writing	6	6
5	Vocabulary	6	6
6	Grammar	4	4

It can be seen from Table 7.4 that the majority of students set objectives in listening and speaking in their learning contracts. This tendency is predictable because the intervention programme was incorporated into the Listening and Speaking 3 module. The table also shows that students mainly focused on improving their language skills rather than enhancing their knowledge in aspects of language like vocabulary and grammar. It is also worth noticing that pronunciation was not on the list of what students were interested in improving although better pronunciation is conducive to improvements in speaking and listening.

7.3.4.2 Assessment of the effectiveness of using learning contract and learning diary

Table 7.5: Assessment of the effectiveness of using learning contract and learning diary (N=25)

Topic	NoM	NoS
Provide a useful tool for studying	10	9
Provide motivation	9	8
Provide a direction	4	4
Provide exposure to English	3	3
Increase confidence	3	2
Help remember what has been learned	2	2
Improve English	1	1
Increase autonomy	1	1
Maybe useful	1	1

- Provide a useful tool for studying

Students' evaluation of the effectiveness of the use of learning contracts and learning diaries to manage their learning was a major theme in the interviews. Almost all students commented positively about the usefulness of these learning tools. Particularly, 27 out of 28 opinions are in favour of these tools, suggesting that they enhance the learning process by providing motivation and exposure to English and increasing confidence and autonomy. There was only one opinion expressing doubts about their effects on learning.

Extract 7.17

Q: Do you think learning diary and learning contract are useful ways to control your learning?

Nguyet: Yeah, maybe it's useful. But I can't maintain it every day because I've forgotten. (Student Interview – Nguyet – Q3)

The student quoted in Extract 7.17 above was unsure about the usefulness of learning diaries to her learning for she did not maintain it regularly. Perhaps she was not

convinced about the possible benefits of this activity and therefore she forgot to do it in her self-study. The issue of this student's reaction will be discussed further in 7.3.4.5.

A closer look into students' assessment of the effectiveness of using learning contract and learning diary reveals that they were mostly regarded as useful tools for learning. This was reported by eight students. By using these tools, students could find solutions to problems in learning and monitor their improvement, as expressed in the following comments.

Extract 7.18

I think I will to (*sic*) do like it in next semester. I think it useful for me to find the fault ... find the solution to study English. (Student Interview – Khanh – Q3)

Extract 7.19

... I haven't done anything like this before this semester. But when doing this I found this some improvements in myself and my study. (Student Interview – Ngan – Q4)

These students also mentioned specific benefits of using these tools to manage their learning, such as controlling their learning effort, setting goals and reviewing progress. Consequently, as these learning management actions constitute students' metacognitive knowledge about the learning process, which has been argued to be essential to the development of students' ability to make informed decision about their learning (see section 2.9), it can be argued that these tools were seen as beneficial in developing students' capacity for autonomous learning. The comments below exemplify how learning contract and learning diary helped the students in learning management.

Extract 7.20

It has some benefits. It can control my study ability. I can follow this to make some progress to help me. (Student Interview – Nguyet – Q5)

Extract 7.21

I think that set up my goals is useful and I think that I should ... er ... after I do something I should take it down what happen [*sic*] so I can review it. (Student Interview – Thien – Q5)

Extract 7.22

I have to say that keeping such a diary reminds me to study English every day, assess myself and set goals. (Student Interview – Anh – Q4)

Moreover, doing learning diaries is a useful activity in itself as it creates an opportunity for students to practise English, such as writing. This point was made in the following comment.

Extract 7.23

In conclusion, I believe that doing diary is very good for me to practise English skills. (Student Interview – Thuy – Q4)

- Provide motivation

Besides being seen as useful tools for learning, especially learning management, learning contract and learning diary were regarded as a source of motivation for learning by eight students. The kind of motivation created by these tools can be extrinsic at the beginning, as a student suggested below.

Extract 7.24

... I have a contract and I have to follow it. It's not that strict but I have to follow it anyway. (Student Interview – Luc – Q5)

Extract 7.25

I think ... I have no idea about this but I try to push myself as hard as I can to follow the learning diary and I think that ... it's good and it brings to me a lot of benefits so I have to keep track on this. And I think create a behaviour like it's very good for my ... not only in my recent study but also for my future job. (Student Interview – Lam – Q5)

In the extracts above, the students suggested that by signing the learning contract and consequently having to keep track of their learning the students took on some obligation which they felt they should fulfil. This acceptance of commitment of the students paved the way for the enhancement of their willingness to take more responsibility in learning. It also provided the necessary momentum for the students to engage more actively in learning. The following extracts from two students demonstrate the learning momentum created by these learning tools.

Extract 7.26

Q: What do you think about using learning diary and learning contract in learning English?

Ho: It is also useful way and it makes students more studious. (Student Interview – Ho – Q6)

Extract 7.27

Q: Do you learn anything from doing the learning diary?

Thu: Yeah, er...I think after doing this diary I *become* (work - NB) harder. (Student Interview – Thu – Q5)

The examples in the extracts cited above demonstrate the effects of the extrinsic motivation created by the learning tools. In other words, the students reported that the tools were instrumental in making them work harder to fulfil their obligation. However, there are two cases in which the students were able to develop intrinsic motivation when using these tools in learning. In the first case, the student found

enjoyment in doing the learning diary because it enables her to choose learning activities that suited her learning preferences.

Extract 7.28

When I did the learning diary, I love it when I had to do the summary of the comics. And I feel like I am suggesting you the comic I am reading. And I feel great. (Student Interview – Minh – Q3)

In the second case, the student particularly stressed how motivation could be shifted from what seemed to be an obligation to an intrinsic enjoyment of the learning experience when she had entered into the habit of learning. From being urged to carry out self-study according to the learning contract, the student became willing to engage in learning on her own. The quote below illustrates that development in motivation.

Extract 7.29

Well, I think it is a kind of motivation because I have responsibility but well, after that I feel that it is necessary for me and when I do the listening skill. Sorry because I just talked about that. And I think that it has changed my mind about listening I feel it more exciting, more interesting and I ...eh... I had the effort to do. (Student Interview – Truong – Q5)

Apparently, it can be argued from the two extracts above that the learning contract and diary can provide the students with an extrinsic motivation by assigning some responsibility to them. This motivation, however, can be shifted to an intrinsic one if the students are guided and encouraged to find out the learning activities that suit their learning styles, which will result in enjoyment and maintenance of effort in learning.

- Provide a direction

Another important benefit of using learning contract and learning diary is that they provide students with a direction for their learning, as suggested by four students in the interviews. In section 6.2.4.1, which discusses students' perception of teachers' roles as the provider of guidance and direction, I argued that students are dependent on teachers for direction in learning because they lack the ability to make a learning plan to achieve their goals. I also stressed that equipping the students with these skills is essential to promoting learner autonomy among these students. The following comments demonstrate the extent to which I have achieved this aim through these tools.

Extract 7.30

Yes, because it makes me ... it have (*sic*) some clues that I follow it and I will improve my English and make progress in my learning. (Student Interview – Hong – Q4)

Extract 7.31

Yes, especially learning diary. Every day I have to remind myself that today I have to do in learning diary. But after this semester I think I will change the diary because I want to make a plan first and after that I will follow the plan. (Student Interview – Tran – Q4)

Extract 7.32

Because in the past, before attending this course I also have plans but I haven't completely done any of them. And when I do this learning diary I think I have some missions. Something that tells me I have to do. I have to do to improve something about my English skills. (Student Interview – Phuong – Q4)

Extract 7.33

And I think this is very good because I make plan and I can control all everything I do to make it in the right way. And I will continue to do it. (Student Interview – Vu – Q4)

It can be seen from the comments above that students appreciated the use of learning contract and learning diary as they gave them a direction, or in a student's words 'the right way', in learning and the commitment to follow it. Also, by using these tools, the students claimed that they could control their learning and monitor their progress.

Extract 7.34

I want to move on what I gain. First, it seems to me that I can control my learning better than before. That is I know what I need and I know what to do and I can motivate myself. (Student Interview – Thu – Q1)

- Other benefits

Apart from the three main benefits discussed above, students also found that doing the contract and diary gave them more exposure to English (three students), helped them remember what they had learned better (two students), helped them improve their English (one student), and increased their confidence (two students).

Extract 7.35

Well, the first benefit. Keeping a diary is really helps (*sic*) me a lot. The first benefit I want to mention is the regular exposure to English. Thanks to writing a diary based on what I have set in my learning contract I get more regular exposure to English every day. (Student Interview – Anh – Q1)

Extract 7.36

Q: How does the diary help you remember what you've learned?

Thai: Because I have paper and I must write on it so I must thinking about what I have done and it also remember me to revise the knowledge that I have learned. (Student Interview – Thai – Q3)

Extract 7.37

First I find it necessary to do learning diary every week. It helps me to improve my English skills, especially listening skills. (Student Interview – Le – Q2)

Extract 7.38

It's eh.. I told you the early. I not [*sic*] very confident in my English but when I do learning diary I ... eh.. at the beginning I consider it like homework but now I feel it like my habit, my eh... I do every day and it helps me to develop myself and I believe in myself. When I believe myself I can do everything better. (Student Interview – Hong – Q4)

There is only one comment in which the student explicitly named learner autonomy as an improvement when using the contract and diary.

Extract 7.39

And the second benefit I'd like to say is although I have to say that the pressure from the teachers really add more ... does attribute to keeping diary every day, I cannot deny that it helps me to increase my autonomy in learning English. To elaborate more on that I'll show you some evidences. For instance, I actively ... I more actively find something to study I mean in English to accomplish my objectives I said I have set in contract. I read books and I listen to some audios and try my best to take notes. I listen one more time ... er ... I listen two or three times and take notes, summarise it. Or I took the most advantages to speak to partner, for example. So that's the way I improve my English skills and also my autonomy in English is increased. (Student Interview – Anh – Q4)

In Extract 7.39 above, the quoted student contends that keeping a learning diary everyday has helped her increase autonomy in learning English. Specifically, she begins to take more responsibility for her learning by actively engage in activities that can help her achieve the objectives she has set for herself in the learning contract. In her case this active acceptance of responsibility has become the motivation for her to sustain autonomous learning.

- Students' assessment and metacognitive awareness

Besides illustrating students' assessment of the effectiveness of using learning contracts and learning diaries in self-study, the extracts presented in this section offer rich evidence about learner autonomy. Although most of these comments do not

specifically mention learner autonomy, except for Extract 7.39 discussed above, they demonstrate students' development in metacognitive knowledge, which can be considered a good indication of improvement in the capacity for autonomous learning. This development is evident in learners' improved awareness of metacognitive aspects of their learning. Specifically, the extracts demonstrate the students' metacognitive awareness of themselves as learners, the learning context, the learning process, and the English language (c.f. Sinclair, 2000a, see Figure 2.1).

Awareness of the learning process can be considered to be the area that has the most examples of students' improvement. Among the topics listed in Table 7.5, 'Provide a useful tool for studying, Provide a direction, Help remember what has been learned, Improve English' are those particularly related to the students' improvement in metacognitive awareness about the learning process. In other words, the extracts presented as examples in these topics demonstrate that the students are aware of tasks in the management of learning, such as setting goals (Extract 7.21), identifying problematic areas and find solutions (Extract 6.49), monitoring learning progress (Extract 7.19, Extract 7.20). More importantly, the students demonstrate the ability to put these tasks together as a sequence of essential, coherent steps in management of learning. This indicates a high level of awareness of the students about the process of learning. Extracts 7.31 – 7.33 vividly illustrate this point.

Another important area of metacognitive awareness is awareness of self as a learner. Evidence of improvement in this area can be found in topics 'Provide motivation' and 'Increase confidence' listed in Table 7.5. Extracts 7.25 – 7.29 reveal students' motivation in self-study and how much they are aware of their own attitude in learning. The students admit that the motivation can be extrinsic at first due to some

sense of assigned responsibility, but they later develop a strong sense of enjoyment of the learning process once they have had the momentum. In addition to motivation, students also display their awareness of self as learners by their ability to look into their self-confidence. This can be found in Extract 7.38, where the student talks about how her confidence was boosted by using the learning tools introduced in the intervention programme.

Other extracts in topics, such as ‘Provide exposure to English’ and ‘Improve English’ (see Table 7.5), also indicate the students are conscious of their learning context. In other words, the students acknowledge the need to create an English-speaking learning environment to increase their exposure to the language to enhance their acquisition (e.g., Extract 7.35). The last aspect of metacognitive knowledge about language learning, namely English language awareness will be discussed in the next section using evidence from other themes (see section 7.3.4.3).

7.3.4.3 Students’ self-assessment of language improvement after intervention

Table 7.6: Students’ self-assessment of language improvement (N=25)

Topic	NoM	NoS
Satisfactory improvement	17	11
Unsatisfactory improvement	5	5

This topic is related to students’ assessment of their progress after the course, especially the effects of the training programme and the result of their self-study using the learning contract and learning diary. Seventeen comments from eleven students expressed that they had made satisfactory improvements in their language competence, especially in vocabulary and listening skills which are the two learning areas that students spent the most effort on (see Table 7.7).

Extract 7.40

I think I've learned a lot of new words and I can use it in my speaking skill and I can speak with my friends easier. (Student Interview – Bao – Q3)

Extract 7.41

In this semester I improve my listening, my TOEFL skills, my speaking skill. And I think this semester I success because I do a lot of work to achieve that. (Student Interview – Thai – Q4)

Extract 7.42

... I can improve my listening. Before I go to this class my listening is very weak. And right now I can hear something and I can understand not much but I can hear the ... I can guess the main ideas and I can know the key words and I guess their meaning and I answer them. (Student Interview – Vu – Q5)

Five students, by contrast, were not satisfied with their level of achievement. They did not think they had improved much, but, importantly, realised the areas that needed more attention.

Extract 7.43

Besides learning the new words I think I can improve my pronunciation, my writing skill. But I think my writing skill is not better, is not good too much. (Student Interview – Bao – Q3)

Extract 7.44

But it seems to me the writing skill is very difficult because I don't have patience and enough words. I am afraid to have a mistake. (Student Interview – Thai – Q3)

In Extract 7.44 above, the student seemed to be more critical about her progress. She realised the reasons for her lack of progress. Other students were also aware of the factors that hindered them from achieving the learning objectives they set in their contract. These include inappropriate aims and lack of time and effort. Take, for example, the following assessment from a student.

Extract 7.45

And to sum up, my listening skill just improves gradually, not really good.

And about my speaking, I'm really sad about my speaking because it's not improve (*sic*) so much. Eh... because the goal I put for it is ... er... speak more naturally, more fluently but I cannot improve more because I don't have enough time. (Student Interview – Trinh – Q5)

The reason for the discontent in Extract 7.45 above may be that the objective for speaking set by the student was too general. Therefore, it was very difficult for him to measure his progress. Also, time is an important factor because it is a real challenge for the student to see some improvement in speaking after a fairly short period of time. However, although the student was not happy with his improvement, his comment can be regarded as an encouraging indication as the student, to some degree, does show an awareness of progress and ability to reflect on learning.

As for another student, although she claimed that she did not make much improvement, it is obvious that she had tried different methods to enhance her speaking skills. Compared with the student in Extract 7.45, this student has a higher chance to improve her skill in the near future as she is aware and critical of her learning process. The fact that she did not feel that she had improved may be due to the high target she set for herself.

Extract 7.46

Well, I have to say that I didn't have much effort on this aspect. I tried to speak as much as possible in English class but ... er... well... I think it is a normal way I use to study because I am kind of curious and I want to ask questions to the teacher and other friends so I think it is not improvement. But in other way I tried to join a speaking chat room in the Internet. And I tried to speak to them but ... er ... I think that their ... the way of the forum is not very effective so I quit it. And well in general my speaking skill doesn't improve a lot. (Student Interview – Truong – Q1)

As I have argued above, regardless of the students' perceived level of language improvement, their self-assessment indicates their awareness of their learning targets and self-reflection. What is more important in these comments is how detailed students can be when assessing themselves. In other words, the depth of the students' reflection can be considered to be an improvement in their awareness of the learning process and the language they are learning. This point can be illustrated by the following examples.

Extract 7.47

And secondly my reading and my writing skills improve a lot. It's easier for me to get what's the writer's ideas (*sic*) and do the summary. (Student Interview – Thu – Q5)

Extract 7.48

I evaluate by ...er... in grammar. I can use the structure of the grammar to apply in the sentence faster and more exactly. And now as I said before I can realise the mistakes of my friends' presentations. (Student Interview – Phuong – Q3)

Extract 7.49

Well, for the vocabulary, I know how ... when to use the words, and also I know how to write in formal way. And for listening skill I am not quite so sure about my assessment but I think that the more information I can get is the better I have used. (Student Interview – Truong – Q1)

Extract 7.50

Well by improve my vocabulary my speaking also improves because I use some new words, idioms in speaking and I find out an interesting way to practise speaking that talking alone like my friend suggest me. And I think my speaking skill may improve a lot because I like doing it with ... (Student Interview – Ngan – Q3)

The examples above could be regarded as striking if we compare them with the results of the analysis of the students' learning diaries (c.f. 7.2.3.2). In contrast to the self-assessment in their learning diaries where the students only evaluated their

learning activities using general terms, such as ‘good’ or ‘ok’, their self-assessment in the interviews were more elaborate and indicated a good awareness of the components of language and their significance to the learning activities. For instance, in Extract 7.47 above, the student provided a detailed account of her improvement in reading by pointing out that she found it easier “to get what’s the writer’s ideas (*sic*) and do the summary”. As for the student in Extract 7.48, she evaluated her improvement in grammar by the fact that she could apply the structures in sentences “faster and more exactly” and she could even recognise the mistake her friends made when they gave a presentation. Extracts 7.49 and 7.50 demonstrate how the students make the connection between improvement in language awareness and performance in learning activities. In these examples, the students reveal that by applying obtained knowledge about English vocabulary, such as usage, style, and idiomatic expressions, they have made improvements in writing and speaking skills. In conclusion, the extracts cited above provide us with a wealth of evidence about the students’ improvement in language awareness and self-reflection, which, as I have argued in 7.3.4.2, can be seen as a positive indication for an improvement of learner autonomy.

7.3.4.4 Self-directed learning behaviour

Table 7.7: Students’ use of learning strategies (N=25)

Topic	NoM	NoS
Listening	19	15
Vocabulary	10	8
Speaking	8	7
Writing	6	5
Reading	5	4
Grammar	2	2

This section is concerned with the students' ability to apply learning strategies in self-study. Table 7.7 offers an overview of the students' use of learning strategies while carrying out the learning activities reported in their learning diaries. The table shows that Listening is the aspect of English into which the students channelled the most effort. This corresponds with the focus of their learning objectives as listed in Table 7.4 and does not come as a surprise because the intervention programme was provided in the Listening and Speaking 3 module. The main difference between the table above and Table 7.4 is the second-placed Vocabulary, which ranks fifth in the latter. This may suggest that the students find enlarging vocabulary essential to improving other aspects of English.

In order to investigate the students' ability to apply learning strategies, besides looking at the frequency of strategy use, it is important to explore the students' decision-making process when utilising the learning strategies. Table 7.8 below displays the topics covered in the student interviews about their metacognitive processes in self-directed learning.

Table 7.8: Self-direction in students' application learning strategies (N=25)

Topic	Number of mentions	Number of students
Adjusting learning activities	6	6
Trying different learning strategies	5	4
Problem solving	5	3
Sustaining learning efforts	4	4
Evaluating learning strategies	2	2

Based on the data presented in the table above, I shall discuss students' metacognitive awareness in management of learning activities, which can be illustrated through their use of learning and motivational strategies, in three areas: Adjusting learning

objectives and activities, Problem-solving and experimenting with solutions, and Evaluating learning strategies and sustaining effort.

- Adjusting learning activities

Six students mentioned this topic in their interviews. The students asserted that the use of learning contracts and learning diaries was only a way for them to control their study but they were not restricted by these tools. Therefore, they were aware of their capacity to make changes to their learning plan to suit the changes in their learning needs and learning conditions. Moreover, it has been stressed that an important attribute of learner autonomy is the students' ability to make informed decisions about their learning (Sinclair, 2000a). This is evident in how the students' decisions to change their learning activities to achieve the learning objectives were guided by their awareness of their learning needs and preferences in the following extracts.

Extract 7.51

And for the vocabulary, well I write in the contract that I would learn about five to ten words a week and I did it. However, in the last two weeks, week 14 and 15, I changed my way of studying and I helped my friend translate his graduation report and I think it is kind of way to improve my vocabulary, especially in human resources major because I like this major. (Student Interview – Truong – Q2)

Extract 7.52

The fact that I didn't stick to the learning contract. I do many things that I like, like listening to BBC. I don't always listening to BBC so I watch without the subtitle, I watch movies, I watch cartoon, I listen to songs and any kinds I like because I don't think ... eh... I think that if I do just one activity for that ... that goal it must be very boring. (Student Interview – Thien – Q3)

In Extract 7.51, the student was in the last few weeks of her learning contract when she decided to change the activity for learning vocabulary. This decision was made based on her consideration of the benefits of the new activity to the enrichment of her

vocabulary, especially in human resources which is the student's interest. Like the student in the preceding extract, the student in Extract 7.52 was highly aware of her learning preferences, so she decided to use various learning activities to achieve her objectives in listening to suit her learning needs.

- Problem-solving and experimenting solutions

Another important aspect in the students' metacognitive awareness in learning management is their ability to identify learning problems and come up with solutions. Although the students did mention their learning problems in the interviews, only three students demonstrated that they were in actual control of their learning process by their ability to articulate their problems and address those specific problems with appropriate learning strategies. The extracts below illustrate this point.

Extract 7.53

The third thing is I miss key words at times because I try to write down, to note down the previous information. To get over this I try to keep track on the lecture and pay attention to key words, stop trying to remember and note down the previous information. Because those information I can add later on. That's some points about my learning contract. (Student Interview – Lam – Q1)

Extract 7.54

My problem is that I can't hear clearly word by word in the lesson. First I think that isn't important because if you listen you can't hear the word by word but you understand quite a content of the lesson it's ok. And now I try to be comfortable with the lesson. I try to listen and recognise the words they use. (Student Interview – Tran – Q2)

Not only were the students able to use learning strategies to overcome their learning problems, but they were also critical of the learning process. Four students reported that they were aware of their own performance and willing to find alternative

solutions to make their learning more effective. The two extracts below can be used to elaborate this point.

Extract 7.55

At this objective I have encountered a lot of difficulties but I tried to set out five steps to have an effective way to taking notes the lecture. First is to listen, second is to listen and take notes, number three is to check the transcripts, the fourth is listen again and five is learn the lecture language. However, I've met several difficulties. I paid too much attention to the supporting details and my writing speed was still very low. And I have difficulties in summarising information and I tried to search on the website and tried to read on a book to find out some strategies that I can improve those drawbacks. (Student Interview – Lam – Q1)

Extract 7.56

This is listening skill. The first method I apply to improve this skill is to listen ... to listen my English favourite songs and writing down the lyrics. But it isn't a suitable method to me so I try another way. I started watching foreign channels whenever I have free time. I think it really works. At the first time I can hear so much and I understand nothing. But after that I can hear and understand more about them. So I will keep this method to improve my listening skill until I can find another better way to improve it. (Student Interview – Phuong – Q2)

In Extract 7.55 the student applied a five-step strategy to take notes effectively in listening. She then monitored and evaluated the process and identified her weakness. Finally she turned to other resources to find a solution to her learning problem. This example demonstrates the student's high level of awareness of the learning process (c.f. Sinclair, 1999a). It also indicates that the student firmly controls her learning process and is able to make informed decision based on her ability to monitor her own performance in the learning process. In Extract 7.56, although the student did not elaborate on the reason why she found the first learning strategy unsuitable for her, she was highly aware of her learning style and performance and expressed her willingness to explore other strategies which can be more effective for her learning.

- Evaluating learning strategies and sustaining efforts

Related to the students' awareness of their own performance in the learning process and their willingness to look for alternative strategies to make learning more effective, two other students demonstrated a "capacity for detachment, critical reflection" (Little, 1991: 4) in thinking about their own learning strategies and evaluate the effectiveness of their application. This capacity is illustrated in the extract below.

Extract 7.57

But on the week 13 my group have to present listening ... eh reading strategies so I have chance to look at my own one. I've spent more time thinking about it. How to make it more efficiently and I figure out my ... the best strategy for me is scanning, reading and summarising will let me make it clearer. (Student Interview – Thu – Q2)

Besides thinking about learning, an important aspect of self-directed learning is the students' willingness in sustaining their learning efforts. It can be highlighted from the extracts above that the quoted students are motivated and have a positive attitude towards learning. These students can be regarded as successful learners by their language competence and their motivation in conducting self-directed learning. By contrast, Extract 7.58 below is from a student who did not seem to be very keen on learning at the beginning of the intervention. However, she managed to sustain her effort for a prolonged period and finally was able to appreciate the benefits that self-directed learning could bring to her. Perhaps, maintaining the students' learning effort is the main challenge of the intervention programme, which also proves to be essential in helping less successful learners to enhance the effectiveness of learning and improve their ability.

Extract 7.58

At the beginning I very fed up and very lazy. I consider it is my homework and I do it every week. It about three or four times a week. Um.. I eh log on Internet and read some ... story in eh chicken soup. Or you can .. I can do the exercise in reading book to improve my reading and I find many new vocabulary. I have a problem that eh... I .. eh it's many ... eh specialise vocabulary and I can't understand. So I have looked it up in my dictionary and I classify which is specialised word and which is general word and I just learn general one. And I ... I not good at listening. So I .. when I watching TV, I turn on Discovery or Geography and I try to learn. I try to listen. But ..eh... I sometimes I can't hear because I can't follow the speed of the native. And I log on Internet and ...eh... listen some lectures. Or ...eh... conversation (conversation) and I learn new vocabulary, some idioms and the way they express the ideas, their pronunciation. I feel I better, I improve day by day, step by step. Not ... eh... very ... eh... clearly because I think it's just three months but I feel I more confident in myself so I think I will continue do learning diary but by my own way. (Student Interview – Hong – Q1)

As I have argued in section 7.3.4.2, the use of learning diaries in the ILTP was considered to provide students with the extrinsic motivation to start learning on their own. Nevertheless, the language learning strategies introduced in the training programme played a vital role in providing the student with various solutions to her learning problems and sustain her effort and motivation in learning. Similar to the student in the extract above, the student in Extract 7.59 below displayed her willingness to sustain learning effort with an aim to improve listening skill. This stems from her confidence in the benefits that the learning strategy she chose could bring about and the belief that success would come when sufficient effort and time was spent on the learning activity.

Extract 7.59

Finally I want to show you my solution, especially in listening skill. Every day I try to write down the content of the lesson. Maybe in the first time I not ... I can't write much but I think with the long time I try I think I will write down a lot and ... I think writing down a lot the content of the lesson is very good because you can improve your listening skill and increase your vocabulary. (Student Interview – Tran – Q2)

7.3.4.5 Challenges in implementing the learning contract and writing the learning diary

Table 7.9: Challenges in implementing the learning contract and writing the learning diary (N=25)

Topic	NoM	NoS
Time constraint	6	6
Lack of motivation	4	4
Tiredness	1	1

In the previous section, I noted that maintaining the students' learning effort could be considered to be the main challenge of the intervention programme. This section further investigates the challenges faced by students, and hence the teacher, in implementing the learning contract and learning diary as a crucial part of self-directed learning. The first challenge is, for many students, implementing the learning contract and learning diary were part of the course requirements that they were obliged to follow. Therefore, they saw keeping a diary as a burden to the already heavy workload of their study. The following extract is typical of student interviews where students used time constraint as a reason for not keeping a learning diary regularly.

Extract 7.60

Q4: Have you got any difficulties when implementing your learning contract?

Ngan: Yes I had some difficulties and sometimes I think I couldn't follow it because some other subjects require me a lot of time ... spend more time. Sometimes I need to struggle a lot to spend time with this. (Student Interview – Ngan – Q4)

The same reason as that given by the student in the extract above can be found in the interviews of five other students. For these students, keeping the learning diary in learning English was an obligation similar to all the homework and preparation they had in other subjects which they sometimes find more important than English.

In addition to time constraint, the lack of motivation and the tiredness of the students are also the excuses students used to explain for their failure to keep a learning diary regularly.

Extract 7.61

I confess that I didn't keep the learning contract. I just do it two days. One day for two weeks and yesterday I have just finished it and print it this morning. (Student Interview – Kim – Q6)

Extract 7.62

There are many reasons. The reason is maybe I am lazy. And I have a lot of homework from other subjects and I am learning another language. (Student Interview – Bao – Q5)

Maintaining learners' motivation can be a good starting point to response to the challenges above. In fact, this point was highlighted by a student in the extract below.

Extract 7.63

And I have to do learning diary I need to keep my motivation. In fact it was very difficult for me to follow what I have planned before. For example I promise myself I would do listening or reading every day but for some reasons like tiredness or sleepiness or too many presentations a week so I just did thrice or twice a week and **hence keeping motivation is very important to finish learning diary**. (Student Interview – Le – Q3, my emphasis)

The student has found her own way to meet this challenge by mobilising her sense of responsibility and the hope to achieve good learning results as her sources of

motivation (see Extract 7.64). However, the challenges discussed above also call for the role of the teachers in helping students to design a manageable learning plan and providing regular feedback of their progress.

Extract 7.64

I find that finishing the learning diary makes me very happy. Because I could finish my responsibility and in addition I hope that by practising this say I can improve my English skills especially in the final exam I can get higher marks in reading and listening, not bad marks in the semester. (Student Interview – Le – Q3)

7.3.4.6 *Future use of learning contract and learning diary*

Table 7.10: Future use of learning contract and learning diary (N=25)

Topic	NoM	NoS
Yes	9	9
No	7	6
Reasons for not keeping learning contract and diary	6	6

Although the learning contract and learning diary received a considerable number of positive comments from most students after a semester using them (c.f. section 7.3.4.2), only a few students committed to continue using them in their future study. The numbers of students who said ‘yes’ (9) and ‘no’ (7) to using these tools do not constitute a marked discrepancy. Apparently, those who said they would continue to use learning contract and diary in their future learning appreciated the benefits that these tools could bring to them, as expressed in the following extract.

Extract 7.65

I think I will keep my learning contract in the future so I can set up my goals and many thing else but my learning diary will be use some difference like I will do whatever I want to improve my listening skill or my writing skill and I just sometimes if I have free time taking down notes only. (Student Interview – Thien – Q4)

For the students who did not want to continue to use the learning contract and diary, the main reasons they gave were time pressure and learning habits. This echoed the main challenge in implementing learning diary in the previous section (c.f. 7.3.4.5). According to these students, making a contract and keeping learning diary took a large amount of time. They saw learning diary as extra, unnecessary work because they did not have the habit of taking notes of what they had done in their study and did not realise the importance of these activities in the learning process. Perhaps, these students prefer to make learning plans in their heads or in other ways and find writing it all down tedious. This could also indicate that some students have not grasped the concept of taking control in learning as they failed to understand that the benefit for keeping a learning diary is for themselves, not for the teacher.

Disappointing as this result may seem to be, it is more important to consider the awareness-raising purposes of these tools. In this matter, these tools have been successful in providing students with a framework for self-study and creating a habit of learning for them. In other words, students have learned to set objectives, make plans, choose learning strategies, and assess learning. Ten students asserted that they had found effective strategies for learning and planned to continue using them in their self-regulated learning. This continuity in self-study to improve English skills is illustrated by the following extracts.

Extract 7.66

Q4: Are you going to use learning diary in the future?

Ho: No, but I will continue to practise listening every day. But I don't write diary of learning. (Student Interview – Ho – Q4)

Extract 7.67

Q5: So why do you decide that you don't want to keep a learning diary in the future?

Anh: Ok, no I ...er... what I meant before was I will not keep such a learning diary I mean so strictly like that every day but ...er ... not a table like that. I may just take a short note or when I listen to something I may or may not jot down a note because it takes time and summary ... I summarise it but like I said before, I will set my goal... I also set my goals and I will try to achieve those objectives but not like that. I mean strictly. (Student Interview – Anh – Q5)

Extract 7.68

Q: But have you got any self-study plan for the next semester?

Thai: Yes, I continue to do what I write on the learning contract. (Student Interview – Thai – Q5)

Although the students in Extract 7.66 and Extract 7.67 expressed their refusal to continue to keep a learning diary, they confirmed that they would keep on following the learning plan and doing the learning activities initiated by the intervention programme. In a nutshell, despite the considerable challenges to the promotion of the use of learning contract and learning diary as management tools in English language learning, the intervention programme was successful in raising the students' awareness about learning management and self-reflection and introducing good learning habits to them.

7.4 Evaluation of the ILTP

Using findings from data in Phase Three, this section provides a preliminary evaluation of the integrated learner training programme introduced in Chapter 4. The effects of the ILTP are evaluated through the students' use of the learning contract and learning diary, which were designed to be learning tools as well as data collection instruments in this study. As learning tools, the learning contract and learning diary

have an essential role in the ILTP. However, their purpose is to facilitate the students' application of the knowledge and skills they gain through learner training into their own learning. The learning contract and learning diary provide the necessary means for the students to keep records of their learning, reflect on their learning processes, and evaluate their learning progress. Additionally, these records provide data about the extent to which the ILTP facilitated students' self-directed learning and fostered their capacity for greater autonomy. In this vein, this section discusses the perceived benefits of the learning contract and learning diary, presents the students' use of learning strategies demonstrated in learning diaries and through interviews, and reveals the perceived language improvements. The challenges to future use of the learning contract and learning diary will also be discussed.

7.4.1 Benefits of using learning contract and learning diary

Commenting about the benefits of using the learning contract and learning diary in English language learning, the intervention students expressed support for these tools, suggesting that they enhanced the learning process by providing motivation and exposure to English and fostering confidence and autonomy. According to the findings of the focus groups in Phase Two and student interviews in Phase Three, the learning contract and learning diary made students feel more committed to learning (see section 6.2.4.3 and 7.3.4.2). This commitment provided the necessary momentum for them to engage more actively in learning and enhances their willingness to take greater responsibility. It is argued that the motivation created by the use of these learning tools can be maintained and developed into intrinsic motivation when the students are guided and encouraged to find out the learning methods that suit their preferences.

The use of learning contracts and learning diaries in the ILTP was also reported to help students develop metacognitive knowledge about English language learning. In particular, the intervention students claimed that they used these tools to manage their learning, set learning goals, monitor learning effort, and review learning progress. In other words, the learning tools offered by the ILTP helped students develop metacognitive strategies which are essential to enhance their capacity for autonomous learning. Students' metacognitive knowledge about themselves as learners and about the learning context was also enhanced by the ILTP. The programme and its tools enabled students to examine their own motivation and confidence and seek opportunities in their learning context to enhance their exposure to the language. Another important aspect of the ILTP is its accommodation of students' needs. With the learning contract and learning diary, the programme provided the students with a direction for their learning. At the same time, the students had the freedom to select their own learning materials and strategies to achieve their learning objectives.

7.4.2 Learning strategies

The use of language learning strategies by the intervention students during the learner training programme is illustrated by the occasions on which these students utilised cognitive, metacognitive and motivational strategies in their learning, as revealed by the student interviews. In particular, the interviewed students demonstrated the capacity to adjust their learning plans in accordance with the changes in their learning needs and learning conditions. They also showed awareness of their own learning problems and the ability to address them with appropriate learning strategies. Besides, the intervention students also developed a more positive attitude towards learning and willingness to sustain their learning efforts. The improvements in student learning indicate the development in the students' ability to make informed decisions about

learning, which can be argued, signify the development in their capacity for greater autonomy.

7.4.3 Language improvement

A considerable number of intervention students (i.e., eleven out of twenty five) claimed that the ILTP and its tools had helped them make satisfactory language improvements, especially in vocabulary and listening skills. However, what is more important is the demonstration of students' awareness of their learning targets and self-reflection. As I have argued above, the depth of the students' reflection, demonstrated by the details of their own assessment, can be regarded as an improvement in their awareness of the English language and the learning process.

7.4.4 Challenges and future use of learning contract and learning diary

Although the learning contracts and learning diaries were perceived as useful language learning tools, six students found keeping a learning diary time-consuming (see section 7.3.4.5). They also lacked motivation in writing down what they did in self-study. These are also the reasons that nine students did not want to use learning diary after the ILTP (see section 7.3.4.6). This finding suggests that alternative ways to encourage such students' reflection of their learning process are necessary, such as writing a reflective paragraph or discussing self-study work with classmates.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an account of the data collected in the third, also the final, phase of the intervention programme. The analysis of the collected data, i.e., from students' learning contracts, learning diaries, and interview transcripts, has shed light on the students' capacity for self-directed learning and the effects of the training programme on the promotion of learner autonomy among these students. The

following section will summarise the key findings and implications presented in this chapter.

With regard to the students' ability to plan their own learning, the analysis of their learning contracts has revealed that just less than half of the students (eleven out of twenty-five) were able to produce a learning contract which had most objectives clearly defined and quantified. However, fourteen out of twenty-five students would need more guidance to be able to set more specific learning objectives. In addition, ten students were able to identify specific activities and listed relevant materials to achieve the objectives they set in the learning contract. If learning objectives and action plans are considered together, only six out of twenty-five students were able to design a good learning contract in which they set specific and realistic objectives and chose suitable learning activities with relevant materials. As I have discussed earlier, because making a learning plan with SMART objectives, feasible action plan, and relevant materials is a sophisticated task requiring lots of experience and practice, it would be an ambitious aim to expect the students to be able to fulfil the task without having undergone a (or more than one) contract cycle in learner training.

Through their learning diaries, the students displayed their ability in making use of learning strategies in self-directed learning. This result could be attributed to the intervention programme which devoted a considerable amount of time to introducing learning strategies to the students. The lowest score factor in the students' learning diaries was their self-assessment. This could have resulted from the students' failure to evaluate the extent to which they had achieved their aims and their performance in the learning process, perhaps indicating a lack of confidence or knowledge concerning how to do this realistically. This indicates the importance of such training

in a pro-autonomy pedagogy. On the other hand, since some students used only brief and simple language for expressing self-assessment, this could have stemmed from the students' poor language competence or lack of motivation to engage in this activity.

The interviews with students have revealed much valuable information about their attitudes towards using the contract and diary to monitor learning as part of the intervention programme. They have also offered insights into the students' learning habits and their efforts to improve their skills. Regarding the promotion of learner autonomy, only one student mentioned autonomy as an important benefit of the intervention programme and the use of the learning tools introduced to them. This could be due to the fact that I did not explicitly use the term 'learner autonomy' to talk about the purpose of the intervention programme to the students for fear that they might realise what I was looking for in the study and tried to please me by talking about autonomy. Nevertheless, as I have argued in section 7.3.4.2, the students' development in capacity for autonomy could be evaluated through the improvements they made in metacognitive knowledge. In the light of this, the extracts exemplified in the analysis of the students' interviews have provided a wealth of evidence illustrating the students' improvements in metacognitive awareness of the learning process, of themselves as learners, of the learning context and of the language that they were learning. Therefore, the ILTP can be said to have helped develop the students' capacity for autonomous learning.

Finally, it can be concluded that the intervention programme was able to enhance the students' motivation in learning English and introduced to them a good habit in self-directed learning. Although more work needs to be done to develop the students'

ability to plan for their study and assess their performance, the intervention programme has paved the way for promoting autonomy among these students. The evaluation of the ILTP in this chapter will be discussed further in Chapter 8 with the support of quantitative data collected in Phase One.

CHAPTER 8. SUMMARY OF RESULTS FROM THE STUDY

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I shall attempt to use the findings obtained through the three phases of this study to tackle the issues raised by the research questions. I shall first present a summary of the findings related to each research question and its sub questions. Then I shall discuss how the research questions can be answered in the light of these findings. Finally I shall conclude the chapter by assessing the extent to which the research questions have been addressed in this study.

8.2 Question 1 - How ready are students of the University for autonomous learning?

8.2.1 Q1a: What are the learning preferences of the University's students with regard to learner autonomy?

According to the findings of the RFAQ presented in Chapter 5, students of the University, especially the intervention students, held high expectations in relation to their teachers' responsibility in the English language class. This is reflected by their positive responses to 13 out of 15 items concerning teachers' responsibilities. This finding indicates that the intervention students highly regard the roles of teachers in English language learning. At the same time, this result highlights their dependence on teachers in this process. However, although both the intervention and non-intervention students expressed acceptance of the traditional teacher-centred classroom, they seemed to demonstrate a preference for a less teacher-controlled approach which defines the teachers' roles as a guide and a facilitator (see section 5.5.2.1 and 6.2.4.4).

The findings of the RFAQ also suggest that students had a strong desire for self-initiated learning activities and learning on their own. This desire indicates their positive attitude towards taking responsibility for learning. According to the RFAQ, the mean scores of all items in the ‘Acceptance and desire for responsibility’ scale are above the neutral level in both the intervention and non-intervention group (e.g., $M > 3$). This finding reveals the students’ preferences for opportunities to take more active roles in learning (see section 5.5.3.1). This observation is also supported by data from focus groups. The analysis of focus group data in Chapter 6 suggests that both intervention and non-intervention students in the focus groups expressed their wishes for more control of learning. They were willing to take greater responsibility for the learning process, including taking the initiative in learning, creating opportunities for themselves, making decisions on what and how to learn, preparing for lessons and setting their own learning objectives (see section 6.2.4.6).

8.2.2 Q1b: What do the University’s students perceive of their ability and confidence in learning?

Regarding the students’ general ability to learn English, the findings from the RFAQ suggest that students were confident about their learning ability. They demonstrated their predilection for learning English and awareness of their own learning needs and purposes (see section 5.4.4.1). They were also eager to know about the learning process and preferred to be informed about their learning performance (see section 5.5.2). These attributes could also be found among the intervention and non-intervention students in the focus groups. These students contended that as they entered adulthood, they developed clearer goals for their future and had a better idea of what they wanted to become later on (see section 6.2.4.7).

In terms of capacity to take responsibility for learning, the intervention and non-intervention students expressed firm beliefs about their ability to make decisions in learning (see section 5.5.4.1). In particular, they responded positively to items related to the ‘capacity to take responsibility’ in the RFAQ (Holec, 1981). The students’ beliefs are also highlighted by the students’ assessment of their own ability for autonomous learning in the PLAQ’s ‘Ability’ scale (see section 5.6.3). In general, the students were confident about their ability to take greater responsibility for making learning decisions. Specifically, 11 out of 13 items have a mean score over 3, ranging from 3.05 to 3.54 (1 = very poor, 2 = poor, 3 = ok, 4 = good, 5 = very good). Although the research population of the PLAQ is smaller than that of the RFAQ and only consists of first year students, the findings of PLAQ can be used to consolidate the findings of the RFAQ because the respondents of these two questionnaires come from the bigger population of English major students at the University.

Despite their general confidence in their own ability to learn autonomously, the students were aware of their shortcomings. Results from the PLAQ reveal that the students considered themselves to be not very good at choosing learning materials in class and planning their learning (see section 5.6.3). In the same vein, according to the RFAQ, they also seem to be less certain about whether they prefer to have the opportunities to make decisions about where and how to learn or choosing their own learning materials (see section 5.5.3.). This uncertainty is particularly apparent in the intervention students’ reservation about taking the opportunities to choose what activities and learning materials to learn. In essence, although the students expressed general confidence in their ability to take greater responsibility in learning, they recognised that there is space for the development of cognitive and metacognitive skills to enhance their capacity for autonomous learning (see section 5.5.3.1).

In addition to revealing students' confidence in their ability to learn English and positive perception of their capacity for making decisions in learning, the study has also found ample evidence of their willingness to take more responsibilities for their own learning. This willingness is indicated in the PLAQ and cogently expressed in the focus groups. Findings from the PLAQ suggest that students were willing to take main responsibility in setting learning goals and stimulating their own interest in learning and agreed on their major part in deciding what to learn outside class (see section 5.3.2.2). Data from the focus groups confirmed that students became aware of their main role in the learning process and realised that learning in class only partly accounted for their progress.

8.2.3 Conclusion

So far I have provided answers to two sub-questions of research question 1. The conclusions reached in this process also contribute to shedding light on the issues raised by research question 1. As I have discussed in Chapter 2 (see section 2.9.2), based on the definition of learner autonomy adopted in this study (see sections 2.3.4 and 2.10), students' readiness for learner autonomy can be investigated in terms of their beliefs about and attitudes towards taking responsibility for their own learning and their metacognitive knowledge about language learning. Therefore, answers to sub-questions 1a and 1b confirm that although students generally believed that teachers have the main responsibility in making decisions about learning (see section 5.6.1), there is plenty of evidence that reflects their positive attitude towards taking more responsibility for learning. The students are willing to take the initiative and make decisions about learning (see section 6.2.4.6).

Data about the students' perceptions of their own metacognitive knowledge about themselves as learners and about the learning process also indicate that students perceived that they had the ability to take greater responsibility for learning (see section 5.5.4). Similarly, data collected from the intervention group show that these students claimed to have good awareness of the English language and their own learning context (see section 5.5.5). However, the study also contains data suggesting that there is a need to improve students' capacity for autonomous learning, especially their metacognitive strategies. The RFAQ has found that few students have the habit of using metacognitive strategies to manage their learning (see section 5.5.1). In addition, findings from the analysis of their learning contracts and learning diary also suggest that the students need training in learning management. Specifically, they need to develop the ability to set realistic learning objectives, make an appropriate learning plan, monitor their progress, and assess their own learning (see section 7.2.3).

In conclusion, the students seemed to be psychologically ready for taking greater responsibility for learning. However, they should be encouraged and trained to become less dependent on the teacher. This could not be an overnight change but rather a gradual process following teacher-guided/learner-decided approach. In this process, the teachers will help students develop metacognitive learning strategies to manage their own learning and gradually transfer the control of the learning process to the students. This scaffolding process will help students gain confidence in and capacity for taking greater responsibility in learning.

8.3 Question 2 - How motivated are the University's students to learn English?

8.3.1 Q2a: What kind of motivation do the students have?

Qualitative data collected from the focus groups indicate that most students in both the intervention and non-intervention groups are motivated in learning English. Their motivation comes from their success in learning or from their beliefs that learning English is instrumental in finding a good job in the future. Regarding the intervention group, it has been found that the majority of the focus group students expressed intrinsic motivation for learning English (see section 6.2.4.1). They also contended that they were motivated by challenging learning tasks which let them apply their skills in practice and work independently of the teachers. In line with this, the intervention students' motivation in learning was reported to be enhanced during the course of the ILTP as a result of its learning tools. Specifically, the use of learning contracts and diaries created a commitment in learning for the intervention students and sustained their learning effort. The effect of the ILTP on enhancing the intervention students' motivation will be discussed further in answer to research question 4.

8.3.2 Q2b: What is the role of autonomy and self-efficacy in motivating the students?

Findings from data collected by different methods in this study confirm the influential role of autonomy and self-efficacy in motivating students to learn. Specifically, it has been indicated in the answer to sub-question 1b, using findings from the RFAQ, that the students demonstrated strong interest in learning English. They were reported to be aware of their needs and purposes and confident in their ability to learn the language well (see sections 5.5.4.1 and 8.2).

Besides highlighting the impact of self-efficacy on enhancing students' motivation, the study also confirmed that motivation can also be improved by a stronger sense of responsibility. The use of the learning contract has suggested that this tool could create an obligation which students felt they should fulfil. This commitment enhanced the students' willingness to take more responsibility in learning and provided the necessary momentum for more active engagement in learning (see section 7.3.4.2). Moreover, students' acceptance of a major role in making decisions related to learning outside class and willingness to take responsibility for setting learning goals and stimulating interest in learning, as suggested by the findings of the PLAQ (see section 5.6.2), can be considered to foster motivation and autonomous in learning according to the attribution theory (Wang and Palincsar, 1989). As I have discussed in section 2.6, attribution theory suggests that motivation to learn can be increased when learners accept responsibility for their own learning and are able to relate results of learning with their own effort (Wang and Panlincsar, 1989, cited in Dickinson, 1995).

8.3.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, the students in this study expressed that they are motivated in learning English, for both intrinsic and extrinsic reasons. Their motivation is reported to be enhanced by the beliefs in their ability to learn the language well and the desire for self-regulated learning. It has been confirmed in this study that students felt motivated when they were given some form of obligation and accepted this responsibility for their own learning.

8.4 Question 3 - How is learner autonomy perceived and practised by teachers and students in the context of tertiary education in Vietnam?

8.4.1 Q3a: What roles do the students perceive that they play as learners (in relation with the teacher)?

Data obtained by a variety of methods in this study have painted a vivid portrait of the Vietnamese students in terms of learner autonomy. The study has found that students hold varied levels of awareness of autonomy. Some students have a simplistic view of autonomy as taking the initiative in learning and self-studying. Others express more sophisticated perceptions which are concerned with metacognitive knowledge, such as understanding oneself as a learner and managing learning (see section 6.2.4.5).

To generate a good representation of the Vietnamese autonomous learners, it is necessary to revisit Littlewood's (1999) distinction between 'proactive' and 'reactive' autonomy. As I have mentioned in section 2.10, this distinction could be useful for the promotion of learner autonomy in the context of tertiary education in Vietnam. According to Littlewood (1999: 75), proactive autonomy is the form of autonomy reflected by learners' ability to "take charge of their own learning, determine their objectives, select methods and techniques and evaluate what has been acquired". This kind of autonomy represents the 'western' view of the concept and can be easily found in definitions of autonomy, such as Holec's (1981) and Little's (1991). Reactive autonomy, in Littlewood's (1999: 75) words, "is the kind of autonomy which does not create its own directions, but, once a direction has been initiated, enables learners to organise their resources autonomously in order to reach their goal".

In the light of the proactive/reactive autonomy distinction, it can be asserted that the roles that students in this study perceived that they play in relation to the teacher are those of reactive autonomy. This conclusion is supported by various forms of data collected in this study. Findings from the focus groups suggest that the intervention and non-intervention students prefer their teachers to play the roles of a guide or learning facilitator. Specifically, they need the teacher to provide them with guidance and opportunities to practise, and press them to learn. They also need teachers' directions about the process of learning in order to achieve their learning goals (see section 6.2.4.4). In the same vein, the results of the 'Acceptance and desire for responsibility' scale of the RFAQ administered to the non-intervention cohort and intervention group reveal the students' uncertainty about their ability to make learning decisions on their own, although they demonstrate strong inclination towards having the opportunity to learn independently of the teacher (see section 5.5.3.1). As discussed in the focus groups, with teachers' guidance and directions, the students were content with their limited role and willing to take the initiative in learning activities, such as using English only in class or reading the materials in advance (see section 6.2.4.5). Nevertheless, this 'desired' perception is masked by the 'desirable' preference for more control in learning discussed in the answer to sub-question 1a (see section 8.2.1).

8.4.2 Q3b. What roles do teachers perceive that they play in relation with the students?

Quantitative data collected in this study reveal that the English classrooms in universities in Hochiminh city are still very much teacher-controlled. Findings from the RFAQ indicate that students have a considerably heavy dependence on teachers in every aspect of learning (see section 5.5.2.1). Similarly, results from the PLAQ

suggest that both students and teachers concur that teachers are mainly responsible for making decisions concerning learning inside class (see section 5.6.1).

While quantitative data depict general trends in students' and teachers' conceptions of the roles of teachers in the English class, qualitative data offer detailed descriptions of teachers' roles from the unique viewpoints of individual students and teachers. Beyond the 'daily' roles pertaining to in-class teaching as suggested by quantitative data, most interviewed teachers believed that they played the role of a motivator whose responsibility is to motivate students, stimulate their interest in learning so that they can initiate learning on their own. However, this finding is a little inconsistent with the finding from quantitative data. According to the PLAQ, the teachers' responsibility for students' interest in learning obtained a mean score of 3.88, slightly lower than 4 - the 'Mainly' responsible level. In their approach to English language teaching, the teachers agreed that they are 'learning facilitators', using their expertise to help students explore the language (see section 6.3.4.1). For instance, they can provide learning skills to students, ask guiding questions, help students set learning goals and make plans, and introduce learning resources to them. The teachers' conceptions of their roles seem to be in line with those of the students'. As I have discussed in the answer to sub-question 3a, students in the focus groups expressed that they need the teacher to provide guidance, create opportunities for them to learn English, and press them to learn. However, these students were divided about the level of teachers' involvement to enforce and ensure students' learning (see section 6.2.4.3).

Although teachers envisage their roles as 'learning motivator' and 'learning facilitator', they are aware that what their students expect might be incompatible with

their perception. In fact, they are convinced that their students regard them as a ‘knowledge provider’ who tells them about everything they need to learn, an advisor who gives directions about what to learn and introduces learning materials to them, or a supervisor who assesses their learning progress (see section 6.3.4.2). The teachers’ belief that students lack the skills to become autonomous learners is illustrated by the findings of the PLAQ, which reveal that teachers do not highly regard their students’ ability to take responsibility for making decisions about their learning. These decisions are related to both in class and outside class learning. Specifically, they did not show confidence in students’ ability to make autonomous learning decisions such as setting learning goals, choosing learning materials, choosing learning activities, and deciding what to learn (see section 5.6.3). As a result, the teachers tend to have an authoritarian view of their role and believe that students rely on them for guidance and provision of learning skills to be able to learn on their own.

8.4.3 Q3c. What autonomous learning strategies do students use in English language learning?

Findings of the RFAQ (see section 5.5.1) revealed that the most popular sources of language input among the non-intervention students are audio-visual media, such as listening to music (95.75%) and watching TV programmes (93.87%) in English. Less popular sources of English input are social interactions such as discussing learning with friends (88.57%) and teachers (70%), and speaking and writing to others in English (77.83%). The RFAQ also found that only a few non-intervention students have the habit of using metacognitive strategies to manage their learning. 62.38% of the students reported that they assessed their own work while only 56.67% said that they made a learning plan in the preceding semester to the study. As for the intervention students, they have the same pattern of language inputs with the non-

intervention students. However, while less intervention students reported to have assessed their own work (52%), more of them said they made a learning plan (62%) than the intervention students. These findings indicated learner training is needed to enhance the students' capacity and encourage them to manage their learning so that they can take greater responsibility for learning.

8.4.4 Q3d. What do English language teachers do to promote autonomous learning?

The majority of teachers participating in this study admitted the importance of promoting learner autonomy in improving students' progress in learning (see section 5.6.5 and 6.3.4.5). One teacher contended that her teaching practice supported learner autonomy because she "showed students how to learn" in her teaching (c.f. Extract 6.67). She encouraged students to take more control in the classroom, discover the subject by themselves and learn from other sources.

According to the findings of the teacher interviews, learner autonomy is commonly conceptualised by the teachers as self-study and students' taking the initiative (see section 6.3.4.3). The interviewed teacher suggested that giving students assignments that encourage them to read the course book in advance and work in groups to answer the questions is a good way to promote learner autonomy. However, teachers needed to offer bonus marks to students who had prepared for lessons. This conception also explains the view that pro-autonomy teaching activities mean allowing students to work independently of the teacher revealed in the findings of the PLAQ (see section 5.6.5). Other methods for promoting learner autonomy were also suggested in teacher interviews, such as monitoring and checking students' work to give them motivation to study, making students aware of the importance of self-study and showing them how to learn (see section 6.3.4.5).

It is striking to note that metacognitive knowledge only plays a modest role in the teachers' perceptions of how to promote learner autonomy. Findings of the PLAQ indicates that only a small number of teachers' opinions mention the need to develop students' metacognitive strategies and give them more control of the learning process (see section 5.6.5). The findings of the PLAQ and teacher interviews have important implications for the promotion of learner autonomy in English language learning in tertiary education in Vietnam. In other words, these findings highlight the need to make teachers aware of the role of learner training, especially in developing students' metacognitive strategies, in fostering learner autonomy among university students.

8.4.5 Q3e. What difficulties do teachers and students perceive of when promoting autonomous learning?

From the teachers' view point, institutional constraints are the major difficulties they encounter when attempting to promote what they consider to be learner autonomy in the university classrooms. These constraints stem from the rigid course syllabus which, by prescribing the teaching contents, creates time pressure and discourages teaching innovations (see section 6.3.4.4). There is also a call for the development of a tested pedagogy for fostering learner autonomy in tertiary education in Vietnam (Extract 6.62 section 6.3.4.4). I shall argue that this pedagogy will need to be 'culturally appropriate' because cultural factors, such as the large power distance and the view of the teacher as an authority, are also considered to have an impact on the promotion of learner autonomy in the Vietnamese classroom. This impact will be discussed in the answer to research question 5.

As for the students, their opinions gathered by the focus groups suggested that existing obstacles in tertiary education could hinder the development of learner

autonomy. They pointed out that learning experiences from lower level had created the students' habit of teacher dependence (see section 6.2.4.4). Besides, the learning context dominated by old-fashioned teaching styles and limited opportunities for English practice, was believed to reduce the students' motivation and interest in learning. Concerning the intervention students who chose to use learning diaries as the learning tools to enable reflection and monitor their own progress in self-study, there were a number of significant challenges they faced during the intervention programme. These challenges included the heavy work-load of the BA programme, time constraints, tiredness, and lack of motivation.

8.4.6 Conclusion

Answers to the sub-questions of research question 3 have clarified teachers' and students' perceptions and practice of learner autonomy in the context of a private university in Vietnam. It has been found in the study that learner autonomy is conceptualised by the participants as self-study, taking the initiative, and making effort in learning. This conceptualisation can be placed in Littlewood's (1999) framework of proactive/reactive autonomy. In other words, the prevalent understanding and practice of learner autonomy in a Vietnamese private university in this study can be said to be characterised by reactive autonomy. From this view point, teachers are believed to have the roles of learning facilitators who provide guidance and set directions in learning for students, while students need to take the initiative in learning, especially self-study following the guidance and direction set by the teachers.

In terms of pedagogy for promoting learner autonomy, the answer to sub-question 3d mentioned several activities, such as giving students assignments for self-study and

showing them how to learn. In my view, these activities can be considered to be useful to promote reactive autonomy by providing students with the necessary direction (i.e., assignments) and means (i.e., learning skills) to engage in self-learning. However, to help students become ‘proactively’ autonomous, it is essential to help students develop other aspects of metacognitive knowledge (i.e., goal-setting, plan making, reflection, monitoring, and self-evaluation) so that they can set their own direction and control the content of learning (Nunan, 1997; Benson, 2011). Although there are difficulties in promoting learner autonomy, as discussed in the answer to sub-question 3e, I would argue that a learner training programme integrated to, and specific to, the subject content, such as the ILTP, can be useful in developing students’ capacity and willingness for greater autonomy in learning. This assertion will be justified in the answers to research question 4 below.

8.5 Question 4 - What are the perceived effects of the learner training programme on the intervention students?

8.5.1 Q4a. What are the perceived effects of the programme on the intervention students’ motivation and use of strategies, especially metacognitive and cognitive strategies?

The intervention students’ responses in their individual interviews at the end of the semester exhibit highly positive attitudes towards the effects of the ILTP. They pointed out that the ILTP enhanced their motivation in learning English. As I have discussed in the answer to question 2a, the learning tools offered by the programme were regarded as a source of motivation for learning. Particularly, the learning contract was believed to create a commitment to self-regulated learning for students. By accepting this commitment, the students took a further step towards taking greater responsibility for their own learning. Additionally, the ILTP helped sustain the

students' motivation in making effort in learning as it provided the students with metacognitive knowledge about the learning process and learning strategies for autonomous learning (see section 7.3.4.4).

Most students believed that the ILTP had enhanced their learning by offering them useful tools for learning, i.e., the learning contract and learning diary (see section 7.3.4.2). It is evidenced from the students' opinions that these learning tools allowed students to control their learning effort, set learning goals and monitor learning progress. In other words, these tools provided the platform for the students to perform learning management skills they learned in the ILTP. The use of these tools enhances the effectiveness of the ILTP in developing students' capacity for autonomous learning by applying their metacognitive knowledge about learning management into the learning process. It can also be found in the students' comments about the ILTP that they have made considerable improvement in developing metacognitive awareness of the learning process, of themselves as learners, of the learning context and of the language that they were learning. This is shown by the depth of the students' reflection on their learning process (see section 7.3.4.2).

Data collected from interviews with intervention students indicate that the students demonstrated their ability to use a wide range of autonomous learning strategies during the course of the learner training programme. In particular, the students reported having used the following strategies (see section 7.3.4.4 and 7.4.2):

- Adjusting learning activities
- Trying different learning strategies
- Problem solving
- Sustaining learning efforts
- Evaluating learning strategies

Additionally, the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test deployed with the RFAQ to compare the intervention students' responses pre- and post-intervention indicates significant increases in the mean scores of two items related to the use of learning strategies in the post-intervention results. These two items are 'I try new ways/strategies of learning English' and 'I can check my work for mistakes'. It can be inferred from this finding that the students have become aware of and confident in experimenting with language learning strategies after the ILTP.

8.5.2 Q4b. What are the perceived effects of the programme on the intervention students' beliefs, attitudes and performance?

In terms of benefits for language learning, the intervention students found that, through the contract and diary, the ILTP gave them more exposure to English, helped them remember what they had learned better, and helped them improve their English. Additionally, doing learning diaries was regarded as a useful activity in itself as it created an opportunity for students to practise English, such as writing. The majority of intervention students believed that they had made satisfactory improvements in their language competence, especially in vocabulary and listening (see section 7.3.4.3).

Findings of the interviews with intervention students indicate that the ILTP enhanced their confidence in learning. The use of the learning contract and learning diary provided students with a direction for their learning (see section 7.3.4.2). As I have discussed in answering sub-question 3a (see section 8.4), this direction paved the way for students to take the initiative and engage in self-directed learning. Consequently, the intervention programme can be said to have enhanced students' confidence and introduced to them a good habit in self-directed learning.

In addition to a direction for learning which was set by the student-owned learning objectives, the students were encouraged to choose their learning activities and choose learning materials to achieve their objectives. According to the RFAQ, there is an increase in the mean score of the item 'I like to be able to choose my own materials for English classes', from 3.18 (SD = 0.814) in pre-intervention to 3.65 (SD = 0.865) in post-intervention. Although this increase was not statistically significant, it can be observed that the post-intervention mean score of the item shows that the students in the intervention group show a stronger preference for being able to choose their own learning materials.

8.5.3 Conclusion

On the whole, the ILTP has received positive reactions from the participants. Although the levels of student commitment and their success in learning varied, the majority of students accepted that the intervention programme was beneficial to their learning. Students reported benefits in enhancing motivation in and awareness about learning. They believed that the ILTP had provided them with useful tools for learning management which allowed them to take control and be more active in learning. In terms of language development, the intervention students believed that they had also made good progress through the learner training programme.

In essence, the ILTP is perceived to bring about the following benefits to the intervention students:

- It raised the students' awareness of metacognitive skills in learning, such as setting objectives, making plans, monitoring, and evaluating the learning progress.
- It encouraged the students to experiment with English language learning strategies.

- It allowed the students to take the initiative in learning and increased their exposure to and use of English both inside and outside class.

8.6 Question 5 - To what extent is culture perceived to play a role in the development and manifestations of learner autonomy in Vietnam?

Three out of six interviewed teachers believed that culture is a factor that had a significant impact on the development of learner autonomy in the context of tertiary education in Vietnam (see section 6.3.4.4). As I have discussed in section 1.4, the Vietnamese culture is influenced by Confucianism. Among the five cultural dimensions in Hofstede and Hofstede's (2005) model presented in the above mentioned section, power distance, characteristic of Confucian heritage cultures, is the dimension that seems to be relevant to this study. This dimension could be argued to have a significant effect on both the teachers' and students' attitudes and beliefs about language learning in the context of this study. In particular, for students, the large power distance means that they regard teachers as having the ultimate authority in controlling the classroom activities. In addition, they believe that teachers, with their position as experts in the field, are the only valid source of guidance and evaluation. Findings from the focus groups indicate that both intervention and non-intervention students tended to rely on teachers for knowledge, instructions and assessment rather than finding out new things on their own (see section 6.2.4.4).

The large power distance between teachers and students, as suggested by a teacher in section 6.3.4.4 (Extract 6.63), also inhibits equal dialogues between them and therefore prevents students from actively discussing learning with teachers. This seems to be in line the findings of the RFAQ about student learning habits, which shows that only 27.01% of non-intervention students and 19% of intervention students (pre-intervention) reported to have talked or written to their teacher about

study in the semester prior to the intervention programme. However, although the power distance between teachers and students is significant, there may be other reasons preventing students from taking the initiative to talk or write to their teacher about study, such as lack of time, a demanding syllabus, or a lack of linguistic ability to discuss their studies with the teacher in English.

The expectation that teachers are experts in the field comes not only from students but also from teachers themselves. A perception commonly held among teachers is that they should always have the answer to questions about the subject they are teaching (see section 6.3.4.4). As a result, they are reluctant to allow students to decide the content of the lesson because of a fear that students may ask for something they are not prepared for. Therefore, teachers see promoting learner autonomy as extra work because they have to invest more time in preparation for lessons to cover all the possibilities.

In conclusion, it seems that the power distance dimension in the Vietnamese culture, to some extent, could hinder the promotion of learner autonomy in tertiary education in Vietnam. Therefore, students should be encouraged by their teacher to take the initiative in learning on their own. At the same time, teachers could attempt to avoid being authoritarian and allow students to have more control of the learning process. This study suggested that the use of learner training with a teacher-guided/learner-decided approach would provide both teachers and students with confidence and capacity for a gradual shift of control towards greater learner autonomy. This suggestion is in line with findings from other studies in similar contexts, such as Lo (2010) and L.C.T. Nguyen and Gu (2013).

8.7 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a summary of the main findings of the study and used them to answer the research questions. In general, the study obtained a wide range of data from the participants through its three phases. The considerable amount of collected data and their variety allowed the use of alternative approaches to data analysis to bring forward detailed and reliable findings in answering the research questions. The extremely rich data produced by this study also warranted a faithful representation of learner autonomy in English language learning at tertiary education in Vietnam. The study has successfully investigated how teachers and students at the University perceived learner autonomy, what roles and responsibilities they believed to be theirs, and what difficulties they saw in promoting greater autonomy in English language learning.

Findings from the study have also indicated positive effects of the integrated learner training programme on improving English language learning and promoting greater autonomy, as perceived by the intervention students. However, the evaluation of the intervention programme was limited to evidence collected in conjunction with the learning contracts and learning diaries. In other words, the intervention programme would have been more convincing if other aspects of the learner training programme, such as, the effects of language learning strategy instruction, collaborative learning, and teacher-guided/learner decided approach, had been accounted for.

Concerning data collecting instruments, although findings from the RFAQ and PLAQ have significantly illuminated many issues raised by the research questions, it must be admitted that these instruments are not free of some common shortcomings inevitable in quantitative methods. First, despite the fact that great care was taken when I

formulated the questionnaire items and translated them from English into Vietnamese, how the respondents interpreted these items was beyond my control. Take, for example, the item 'I'd like the teacher to help me make progress outside class' could be understood differently by students and teachers. Teachers may not see this as their main responsibility because learning outside class requires learners to take the initiative. Students, however, may see 'helping' as giving them guidance, homework or project for self-study, and feedback and encouragement to urge them to learn on their own.

Second, it is simple to decide how many respondents agreed with a statement and how strongly they did so. However, it is a real challenge if we want to know why the participants responded in a certain way. Therefore, seemingly straightforward statistics of responses are not so obvious when inferences from them are to be drawn. As respondents differ from each other in terms of learning experience, attitudes, beliefs, language competence, a quantitative questionnaire can by no means allow us to pin down the factors or the psychological processes that lead to their making a certain choice.

In order to make up for the shortcomings of quantitative methods, I employed qualitative data collected by interviews and focus groups and incorporated them with the findings from the quantitative data. By doing so, I hope to come up with an in-depth account of the psychological processes and the reasons behind the trends found in the quantitative data. Moreover, the use of qualitative data was expected to unearth more subtle, unexpected and interesting issues that might be overlooked in the survey. Nevertheless, as qualitative data provide rich, detailed information specific to individual participants, this type of data tend to be narrowly defined and fragmented.

In other words, qualitative data in this study could be used to illustrate and elaborate general trends identified by quantitative data, while any attempt to make sweeping generalisations from qualitative data would be discouraged due to the nature of this type of data.

CHAPTER 9. CONCLUSION

9.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the thesis by discussing the significance of the study, considering its limitations, reiterating its implications, and making suggestions for future research.

9.2 Significance

Firstly, this study is unique in that it investigates how students' and teachers' awareness of learner autonomy and the perceptions of their roles in English language learning affect their beliefs and practice in promoting greater autonomy in the context of tertiary education in Vietnam. Secondly, this is the first study in Vietnam that offers a learner training programme which adopts a systematic framework based on sound theoretical grounds and encompasses a developmental approach with the support of learning tools to develop students' capacity for greater autonomy. This study has uncovered new, context-related information and contributes to knowledge in the field in a number of areas:

9.2.1 Theoretical contributions

9.2.1.1 Learner autonomy in Vietnam means taking the initiative

This study has revealed that the major perception of learner autonomy in this Vietnamese context relates to 'taking the initiative' in learning, especially in self-study. This conceptualisation of autonomy is commonly shared between students and teachers. For students, autonomy means taking the initiative in preparing for the lessons, creating opportunities to practise and accepting this responsibility for learning. This view is also shared by the teachers involved who add that learner autonomy is reflected through students' self-study and their self-initiation in

preparing for lessons in advance. These manifestations of ‘taking the initiative’ in self-study as perceived by the students and teachers in the context of this research can be argued to represent the reactive type of autonomy suggested by Littlewood (1999) because students are expected to be proactive in the learning process to meet the requirements set by the subject syllabus. This connection will be discussed in the next section.

This understanding of learner autonomy in the Vietnamese context emphasises the role of students’ willingness to take an active role in learning. It also requires the students’ motivation and effort in the learning process. However, this conceptualisation fails to recognise the essential role of students’ capacity in learner autonomy. This finding substantiates my comments about the ‘eastern’ views of autonomy (e.g., Pierson, 1996; Hsu, 2005) that they seem to assume that learners somehow need to acquire the capacity for autonomous learning by themselves (c.f. 2.7.2). Therefore, by identifying how learner autonomy is conceptualised in English language learning in the context of tertiary in Vietnam, this study highlights the importance of raising the teachers’ and students’ awareness of the role of students’ capacity, especially their metacognitive knowledge about language learning, in promoting greater autonomy.

9.2.1.2 The role of Reactive and Proactive learner autonomy

This study also provides evidence to support the validity and appropriateness of Littlewood’s (1999) distinction between reactive and proactive autonomy, showing that this distinction also relates to the context of Vietnam. Its findings reveal that the type of learner autonomy, as understood and practised by students in the context of Vietnamese tertiary education, has the characteristics of reactive autonomy (see

section 6.3.4.3 and 8.4.1). The study shows that the roles perceived by teachers and students are those of reactive autonomy. This is reflected in the intervention and non-intervention students' wish for their teachers to play the roles of a guide or learning facilitator who provide them with guidance and directions about the process of learning (see section 6.2.4.4) and the teachers' assumptions about their students' roles in taking the initiative in self-study (see section 6.3.4.3). The relevance of reactive/proactive autonomy distinction to the Vietnamese context also lends itself to the application of Sinclair's (2000a) teacher-guided/learner-decided approach to promoting learner autonomy in the learner training programme in this study. In other words, the programme demonstrates that this approach gradually develops students' capacity to take more control in the learning process and enhances their ability to set the direction for themselves to carry out proactive autonomy (see section 8.5).

9.2.1.3 The desired vs. the desirable

The findings of the study show that assessing students' readiness for learner autonomy through their perceptions of the roles and responsibilities in the language classroom is by no means a straightforward process. The seemingly contradictions in the students' dependence on teachers and their desire for more control in the classroom as reported in the study required the introduction of Hofstede and Hofstede's (2005) distinction between 'the desired' and 'the desirable' to make sense of the students' responses. This finding was unexpected and suggests that readiness for learner autonomy, as identified by measuring by the students' willingness, could be fuzzy and confusing, or even misleading without the use of such distinction. In other words, it is desirable for the students that they can take greater responsibility for learning. This desire can be understood as the students' reaction to the teacher-controlled education in which they find themselves. However, what is desired by the

students, or what they want from their teacher, is direction and guidance. This, however, can be regarded as a way for students to compromise the deficiency in their perceived metacognitive knowledge about language learning so that they can achieve the desirable control of the learning process.

9.2.1.4 Learner training and the promotion of learner autonomy

This study has also demonstrated that a programme of learner training is an effective way to promote greater awareness and participation in learner autonomy in this context. Specifically, the integrated learner training programme (ILTP), which provided the students with metacognitive strategies for learning management, raised their awareness of themselves as learners and of the learning context, and encouraged them to explore the English language and its learning strategies, was perceived to foster the students' willingness and enhance their ability to take the initiative in learning and create a habit of engaging more in self-directed learning.

It has also been demonstrated in this study that the suggested learner training programme, with the teacher-guided/learner-decided approach and the systematic employment of carefully designed learner training tools, could lead to a greater understanding and development of metacognitive learning strategies for the students. Students enrolled in the training programme reported that learner training activities, such as making a learning contract and keeping learning diaries had provided them with effective tools to manage their learning and contributed to the development of greater motivation to engage in self-directed learning.

9.2.1.5 Culture and context in promoting learner autonomy

This study revealed certain obstacles to promoting learner autonomy in Vietnam. In particular, the exam-oriented educational context poses significant challenges to both

teachers and students in their efforts to promote autonomous learning. These difficulties include time constraints and a stringent syllabus. This echoes the findings from Dang's Vietnamese (2010: 5) study, which observes that "[t]raditionally, lecturers were not encouraged to diversify their class activities and lead class discussions beyond the textbook scope [sic]" as doing so would be considered as failing "to obtain the program objectives [sic]". The pressures from the standardised exams have been suggested to result in students taking a product-oriented approach that views learning as an end-product (Jing, 2006; Lo, 2010) in China and Taiwan. This could also be relevant to the students in the current study as this could be the reason why many of them failed to appreciate the importance of monitoring and reflecting on the learning process through keeping a learning diary (see section 7.3.4.5).

In addition to the contextual constraints, the large power distance between teachers and students in Vietnamese culture was also suggested to be a factor in hindering learner autonomy because it results in teacher reliance and an authoritarian view of the roles of teachers in the language classroom. This cultural trait, combined with the contextual constraints, seems to discourage teachers from giving students more control in the classroom and, at the same time, inhibits students from taking such control.

This study confirms the appropriateness of a psychological model of learner autonomy which emphasises "the internal modification within each learner" in the Vietnamese educational context, where the what of learning is predetermined by the school curriculum and the teachers (L.C.T. Nguyen and Gu, 2013: 25). However, it has also taken into account "external contributions from the environment" (Dang,

2010: 4). Through the ILTP, the study has placed learners in the centre of the learning process and helped them develop the metacognitive knowledge (*i.e.*, knowledge about oneself as learners, the learning context, the language, and the learning processes) for more autonomous language learning.

9.2.2 Methodological contributions

In terms of research methodology, this study contributes to the currently growing use of mixed methods in researching learner autonomy. However, the study is distinctive in its utilisation of an intervention design with a learner training programme and an array of different data collecting methods which result in diverse types and forms of data. The study is also unique in its comprehensive approach by using data from students and teachers to investigate the promotion of learner autonomy in the Vietnamese context. This approach provides the study with a balanced view on the issues in fostering autonomous learning at a university in Vietnam.

This study also contributed to the growth of literature in research into learner autonomy in the Vietnamese context. It supplements the approaches of previous studies (e.g., Trinh, 2005 and L.C.T. Nguyen, 2009) by including teachers' perceptions in its investigation into fostering learner autonomy in English language learning among university students. The findings about the teachers' conceptualisation of and their practice in promoting learner autonomy reported in this study highlights the importance of the inclusion of teachers' perceptions in future research in order to achieve comprehensive and effective solutions to the promotion of learner autonomy in English language learning at tertiary level in Vietnam.

9.2.3 Pedagogical contributions and implications for the future of TESOL in Vietnam

This study also makes pedagogical contributions to fostering learner autonomy. It provides evidence that a learner training programme can be designed and integrated into an existing English language subject in the curriculum, despite the practical constraints to be found in the Vietnamese educational context. This integration allowed the development of students' language competence, following the requirements of the curriculum, while concurrently fostering their capacity for autonomous learning, which is beneficial to students' performance in other subjects.

As I have discussed in 9.2.1.1, the common perception of learner autonomy among teachers and students at a private university in Vietnam identified by this study underlines the need to promote the role of metacognitive knowledge about language learning. In other words, it is essential that teachers recognise the importance of metacognitive knowledge, especially metacognitive strategies for the management of learning, in developing students' capacity for greater autonomy in English language learning and focus on providing students with this knowledge in teaching.

The study also unearths the discrepancy between the students' expectation and willingness to be given more control in the learning process and the teachers' lack of confidence in the students' ability for greater autonomy. It is suggested in this study that an integrated learner training programme with a teacher-guided/learner-decided approach is suitable for promoting learner autonomy in English language learning in the Vietnamese context as it allows students to develop their capacity and teachers to gradually hand over the control of the learning process to students as their ability improves.

Finally, the study reiterates the important role of teachers in maintaining students' motivation and monitoring their progress in fostering learner autonomy in English language learning at tertiary level in Vietnam. The initial direction set by teachers and their guidance provide the students with the necessary starting point for them to take a more active role in learning. Additionally, the teachers' regular monitoring and supervision are instrumental in maintaining the momentum for the students' self-directed learning.

9.3 Limitations of the study

Although I have made much attempt to deliver the best possible thesis, the study can by no means avoid some limitations due to various factors including the nature of the research, the constraints of a PhD work, and the actual context in which the research took place. These limitations are discussed in this section.

Firstly, as a case study conducted in a private university in Vietnam, this study is limited in its generalizability to other contexts, within and outside Vietnam. It would have been useful, in this regard, to extend the learner training programme to a wider context by involving student participants from other institutions, such as state-run universities in Vietnam. The inclusion of students from other institutions would have allowed me to widen the scope of the findings to encompass other important constituents of Vietnamese tertiary education. In addition, as a result of this extension, the expansion of the number of students in the intervention programme and in the focus groups would have enabled me to draw quantitatively stronger conclusions about the trends in the students' perceptions of learner autonomy and their willingness to take greater responsibility for learning. However, this was not possible at the time of the study.

Secondly, as the intervention programme required me to fulfil the prescribed syllabus of the language subject at the same time as providing the learner training intervention, the extra work meant that I could only teach one intervention group. This limited my understanding of the non-intervention students' beliefs and attitudes to some extent. Moreover, because I did not take charge of any classes, other than the intervention class, due to the amount of time needed for teaching and data collection, it was more difficult for me to call for their participation and build rapport with them in focus groups.

Finally, as I have discussed in Chapter 4, the learner training programme used in this study was designed to provide students with metacognitive knowledge about English language learning by implementing the learning contract and diary and encouraging students to experiment with and reflect on different learning strategies. As a result, the data collecting instruments in this study were designed to focus on the effectiveness of the learning tools in fostering self-directed learning and promoting language improvement. The learner training programme could have been more thoroughly assessed and its benefits more convincingly presented had there been an examination of the perceived effects of other aspects of the programme, such as the cognitive learning strategy training, collaborative learning and the teacher-guided/learner-decided approach. However, this would have been beyond the scope of the present study and would require further research.

9.4 Suggestions for further research

This study is limited to investigating the effectiveness of an intervention programme to foster learner autonomy for English-major students at a private university in Hochiminh city, Vietnam. Therefore, further studies can be conducted to extend the

scope in terms of students, universities, and locations so that comprehensive and far-reaching results can be obtained. An extensive study will be useful for the development of an effective learner training programme to foster learner autonomy in tertiary education in Vietnam.

In addition to expanding the scope of the research, future studies can also aim at investigating the effects of the learner training programme on students' linguistic achievements and motivation in language learning through a more prolonged period. This can be done by using quantitative or qualitative instruments to measure the changes that the programme brings about in the students' language competence and motivation in a longitudinal study design.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. BASIC BELIEFS OF ALTERNATIVE INQUIRY PARADIGMS

Issue	Positivism	Post-positivism	Critical Theory <i>et al.</i>	Constructivism
Ontology	Naïve realism—‘real’ but quality apprehendable	Critical realism—‘real’ reality but only imperfectly and probabilistically apprehendable	Historical realism— virtual reality shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values crystallised over time	Relativism— local and specific constructed realities
Epistemology	Dualist/ Objectivist; Findings true	Modified dualist/ Objectivist; critical tradition/community; findings probably true	Transactional/ subjectivist; mediated findings	Transactional/ Subjectivist; created findings
Methodology	Experimental/ manipulative; verification of hypothesis; chiefly quantitative methods	Modified experimental/ manipulative; critical falsification of hypotheses; may include qualitative methods	Dialogic/ dialectic	Hermeneutic/ dialectic

Taken from Guba and Lincoln (1994: 109)

APPENDIX B. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND INSTRUMENTS

Instruments	RFAQ (cohort)	RFAQ (Pre-I)	RFAQ (Post-I)	PLAQ for teachers	PLAQ for students	Learning contract	Learning diary	Learning diary interviews	Focus group	Teachers' interviews
Participants	English major students	IG	IG	Teachers from the University and other universities	1 st year English students	IG	IG	IG	IG	Teachers from the University
Quantity	213	21	21	65	92	23	15	25 x 5 mins	3 x 1 hour	6 x 30 mins
Q1. How ready are students of the University for autonomous learning?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Q1a: What are the learning preferences of the University's students with regard to learner autonomy?	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	
Q1b: What do the University's students perceive of their ability and confidence in learning?	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	
Q2. How motivated are the University's students to learn English?						✓	✓	✓	✓	
Q2a: What kind of motivation do the students have?						✓	✓	✓	✓	
Q2b: What is the role of autonomy and self-efficacy in motivating the students?							✓	✓	✓	

Instruments	RFAQ (cohort)	RFAQ (Pre-I)	RFAQ (Post-I)	PLAQ for teachers	PLAQ for students	Learning contract	Learning diary	Learning diary interviews	Focus group	Teachers' interviews
Q3. How is learner autonomy perceived and practised by teachers and students in the context of tertiary education in Vietnam?				✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Q3a. What roles do the students perceive that they play as learners (in relation with the teacher)?	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	
Q3b. What roles do teachers perceive that they play in relation with the students?				✓						✓
Q3c. What autonomous learning strategies do students use in English language learning?						✓	✓	✓	✓	
Q3d. What do English language teachers do to promote autonomous learning?				✓						✓
Q3e. What difficulties do teachers and students perceive of when promoting autonomous learning?							✓	✓	✓	✓

Instruments	RFAQ (cohort)	RFAQ (Pre-I)	RFAQ (Post-I)	PLAQ for teachers	PLAQ for students	Learning contract	Learning diary	Learning diary interviews	Focus group	Teachers' interviews
Q4. What are the perceived effects of the learner training programme on the intervention students?							✓	✓	✓	
Q4a. What are the perceived effects of the programme on the intervention students' motivation and use of strategies, especially metacognitive and cognitive strategies?							✓	✓	✓	
Q4b. What are the perceived effects of the programme on the intervention students' beliefs, attitudes and performance?							✓	✓	✓	
Q5. To what extent is culture perceived to play a role in the development and manifestations of learner autonomy in Vietnam?							✓	✓	✓	✓

APPENDIX C. READINESS FOR LEARNER AUTONOMY QUESTIONNAIRE (RFAQ)

We're interested in your views of the roles of learners and teachers in language learning. Could you please give us your opinions as indicated below?

Background information

Course title: _____

Course type: _____

Year of study: _____

Sex: M / F

How long have you been studying English? _____

Have you taken any international English tests? If yes, what was your score?

The questions

Section I: ATTITUDES

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of these statements about your language learning by blackening the number which matches your answer. Number 0 is an example.		<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>
0	<i>I like English food.</i>	①	②	③	④	⑤
1	I know some differences between American English and British English.	①	②	③	④	⑤
2	English is an important foreign language these days.	①	②	③	④	⑤
3	In my opinion, the role of the teacher is to give me regular tests to evaluate my learning.	①	②	③	④	⑤
4	In English classes in my university, we speak a lot of English.	①	②	③	④	⑤
5	I am aware that there are some sounds in English which do not exist in my language.	①	②	③	④	⑤
6	I like to be able to choose my own materials for English classes.	①	②	③	④	⑤
7	I can find my own ways of practicing.	①	②	③	④	⑤
8	I need the teacher to set learning goals for me.	①	②	③	④	⑤
9	I can identify my strengths and weaknesses.	①	②	③	④	⑤
10	It's cool to have foreign English speaking friends.	①	②	③	④	⑤
11	A lot of language learning can be done without a teacher.	①	②	③	④	⑤
12	I like teachers who give us a lot of opportunities to learn on our own.	①	②	③	④	⑤
13	It is the teacher's responsibility to create opportunities for me to practice.	①	②	③	④	⑤
14	People in Vietnam who can speak English well have a better social status (e.g., they make more money; they are more educated, etc.).	①	②	③	④	⑤
15	I am good at applying new ways/strategies of learning English.	①	②	③	④	⑤
16	I can explain why I need English.	①	②	③	④	⑤
17	I enjoy learning English.	①	②	③	④	⑤
18	The university treats English as a very important subject.	①	②	③	④	⑤
19	I need the teacher to stimulate my interest in learning English.	①	②	③	④	⑤

20	Learning idioms and phrases by heart can improve my spoken English.	①	②	③	④	⑤
21	There are a lot of opportunities to learn and practise English in Hochiminh city.	①	②	③	④	⑤
22	The teacher needs to point out my weaknesses in English.	①	②	③	④	⑤
23	I am not confident about my English ability.	①	②	③	④	⑤
24	I am good at measuring my progress.	①	②	③	④	⑤
25	I'd like the teacher to help me make progress outside class.	①	②	③	④	⑤
26	I am good at language learning.	①	②	③	④	⑤
27	I know some differences between spoken and written English.	①	②	③	④	⑤
28	I dislike being told how I should learn.	①	②	③	④	⑤
29	The role of the teacher is to make me work hard.	①	②	③	④	⑤
30	I am good at using a dictionary to find information about new words.	①	②	③	④	⑤
31	English is not my favourite subject.	①	②	③	④	⑤
32	It is cool to speak English with native speakers (e.g., Americans) on the street.	①	②	③	④	⑤
33	I don't feel I could improve without a teacher.	①	②	③	④	⑤
34	The teacher should set a good example and inspire me.	①	②	③	④	⑤
35	We all work hard on English.	①	②	③	④	⑤
36	Success in English is regarded as very important in my family.	①	②	③	④	⑤
37	I am good at finding resources for learning.	①	②	③	④	⑤
38	I know my learning style and use it effectively.	①	②	③	④	⑤
39	I need the teacher to introduce different ways of learning to me.	①	②	③	④	⑤
40	I am good at setting my own learning goals.	①	②	③	④	⑤
41	I think teachers should give us opportunities to select what we like to learn.	①	②	③	④	⑤
42	In my opinion, the teacher is responsible for explaining why we are doing an activity.	①	②	③	④	⑤
43	I am good at planning my learning.	①	②	③	④	⑤
44	I think the teacher's responsibility is to decide what I should learn in English lessons.	①	②	③	④	⑤
45	I can check my work for mistakes.	①	②	③	④	⑤
46	I need the teacher to help me make progress during lessons.	①	②	③	④	⑤
47	I think I have the ability to learn English well.	①	②	③	④	⑤
48	I think the role of the teacher is to explain grammar and vocabulary.	①	②	③	④	⑤
49	Stressing the right word in a sentence is important for the correct meaning/emphasis. E.g., "That's MY bicycle", not "That is my BICYCLE".	①	②	③	④	⑤
50	I need the teacher to choose activities for me to learn English.	①	②	③	④	⑤
51	Stressing the right part of an English word is important for the correct pronunciation. e.g., banAna, not bAnana.	①	②	③	④	⑤
52	I can ask for help when I need it.	①	②	③	④	⑤
53	In my opinion, the teacher should decide how long I spend on activities.	①	②	③	④	⑤
54	I am above average at language learning.	①	②	③	④	⑤

55	Language learning involves a lot of self-study.	①	②	③	④	⑤
56	I think teachers should give us opportunities to decide where and how to learn.	①	②	③	④	⑤
57	In my opinion, the role of the teacher is to provide answers to all my questions.	①	②	③	④	⑤
58	I know that in order to speak English well, I have to listen to a lot of English.	①	②	③	④	⑤
59	I know the best ways to learn and practise English for me.	①	②	③	④	⑤
60	It's not cool to speak English in class.	①	②	③	④	⑤
61	I enjoy tasks where I can learn on my own.	①	②	③	④	⑤
62	I think the teacher should decide what activities I do to learn English outside class.	①	②	③	④	⑤

Section II: PRACTICE

Last semester, did you ever ...		<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
63	read reference books (grammar, vocabulary, skills) on your own?	Y	N
64	note down new words and their meanings?	Y	N
65	write in English (email, diary, face book, blog)?	Y	N
66	read English materials (notices, newspapers, magazines, books, etc)?	Y	N
67	watch movies or TV programmes in English?	Y	N
68	listen to English songs or English radio?	Y	N
69	talk to foreigners in English?	Y	N
70	practise using English with friends or go to an English speaking club?	Y	N
71	do English self-study in a group?	Y	N
72	talk or write to your teacher about your study?	Y	N
73	use the Internet in English (to read news, do research)?	Y	N
74	ask the teacher questions when you didn't (don't) understand?	Y	N
75	make suggestions to the teacher?	Y	N
76	take opportunities to speak in English in class?	Y	N
77	discuss learning problems with classmates?	Y	N
78	make a learning plan?	Y	N
79	assess your own work?	Y	N

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HELP WITH THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.

APPENDIX D. SUMMARY OF THE STRUCTURE OF THE RFAQ

Section/ Group	Number of items	Focus	Items	Reference
1	15	The role of the teacher	<p>In my opinion, the role of the teacher is to ... (various structured to be used)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - make me work hard * - create opportunities for me to practice** - decide how long I spend on activities** - explain why we are doing an activity** - set learning goals for me** - give me regular tests to evaluate my learning** - point out my weaknesses in English\$ - provide answers to all my questions # - explain grammar and vocabulary# - help me make progress during lessons\$ - help me make progress outside class\$ - stimulate my interest in learning English\$ - decide what I should learn in English lessons\$ - choose activities for me to learn English\$ - decide what activities I do to learn English outside class\$ 	Cotterall (*1995, **1999) #my addition \$ Spratt <i>et</i> <i>al.</i> (2002)

2	9	Acceptance of and desire for more responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language learning involves a lot of self-study * - I don't feel I could improve without a teacher * - A lot of language learning can be done without a teacher * - I enjoy tasks where I can learn on my own * - I like to be able to choose my own materials for language classes * - I think teachers should give us opportunities to select what we like to learn ** - I dislike being told how I should learn ** - I like teachers who give us a lot of opportunities to learn on our own ** - I think teachers should give us opportunities to decide where and how to learn ** 	*Broady (1996), **Thang and Alias (2007)
3	9	Metacognitive knowledge: knowledge about themselves as learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I am good at language learning * - I am above average at language learning * - I think I have the ability to learn English well * - I know my learning style and use it effectively ** - English is not my favourite subject # - I enjoy learning English # - I am not confident about my English ability # - I know the best way for me to learn English* - I can identify my strengths and weaknesses* 	*Cotterall (1999), **Thang and Alias (2007), #my addition
4	7	Metacognitive knowledge: language awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I know some differences between American English and British English. - I know some differences between spoken and written English. - Learning idioms and phrases by heart can improve my spoken English. - I am aware that there are some sounds in English which do not exist in my language. - Stressing the right part of an English word is important for the correct pronunciation. e.g., <i>banAna</i>, not <i>bAnana</i>. - Stressing the right word in a sentence is important for the correct meaning/emphasis. E.g., “That’s MY bicycle”, not “That is my BICYCLE”. - I know that in order to speak English well, I have to listen to a lot of English. 	Hsu (2005)

5	10	Metacognitive knowledge: learning context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are a lot of opportunities to learn and practise English in Hochiminh city. - In English classes in my university, we speak a lot of English. - English is an important foreign language these days. - We all work hard on English. - The university treats English as a very important subject. - Success in English is regarded as very important in my family. - It is cool to speak English with native speakers (e.g., Americans) on the street. - It's cool to have foreign English speaking friends. - It's not cool to speak English in class. - People in Vietnam who can speak English well have a better social status (e.g., they make more money, they are more educated, etc.). 	Hsu (2005)
6	10	Metacognitive knowledge: learning process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am good at ... - setting my own learning goals* - planning my learning* - measuring my progress* - finding resources for learning* - applying new ways/strategies of learning English** - using a dictionary to find information about new words** <p>I can ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ask for help when I need it* - find my own ways of practising* - check my work for mistakes* - explain why I need English* <p>I often think about how to improve my English learning.</p>	*Cotterall (1999), **Hsu (2005)

7	15	Practice: Self-initiated Learning Activities	<p>Last semester, did you...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - read reference books (grammar, vocabulary, skills) on your own? - note down new words and their meanings? - write in English (email, diary, face book, blog)? - read English materials (notices, newspapers, magazines, books, etc)? - watch movies or TV programmes in English? - listen to English songs or English radio? - talk to foreigners in English? - practise using English with friends or go to an English speaking club? - do English self-study in a group? - talk or write to your teacher about your study? - use the Internet in English (to read news, do research)? - ask the teacher questions when you didn't understand? - make suggestions to the teacher? - take opportunities to speak in English in class? - discuss learning problems with classmates? - make a learning plan? - assess your own work? 	Spratt <i>et al.</i> (2002)
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APPENDIX E. PERSPECTIVES ON LEARNER AUTONOMY

QUESTIONNAIRE (PLAQ - *Version for Teachers*)

We are interested in your views of the roles of learners and teachers in second language learning. Please give your opinions on the questions below. Answer each question in relation to both the teacher AND the students

Section 1: Responsibilities

(Blacken both 'Teacher & Students' circles)

To what extent do you think the teacher and students are responsible for ...:

		<i>Not at all</i>	<i>A little</i>	<i>Some</i>	<i>Mainly</i>	<i>Completely</i>
Example: 0. <i>maintaining an English speaking environment in class</i>	<i>Teacher</i>	①	②	③	④	⑤
	<i>Students</i>	①	②	③	④	⑤
1. Students' progress during lessons?	Teacher	①	②	③	④	⑤
	Students	①	②	③	④	⑤
2. Students' progress outside class?	Teacher	①	②	③	④	⑤
	Students	①	②	③	④	⑤
3. Students' interest in learning English?	Teacher	①	②	③	④	⑤
	Students	①	②	③	④	⑤
4. Students' working harder?	Teacher	①	②	③	④	⑤
	Students	①	②	③	④	⑤
5. Identifying students' weaknesses in English?	Teacher	①	②	③	④	⑤
	Students	①	②	③	④	⑤
6. Setting learning goals for students for their English course?	Teacher	①	②	③	④	⑤
	Students	①	②	③	④	⑤
7. Deciding what should be learned in English lessons?	Teacher	①	②	③	④	⑤
	Students	①	②	③	④	⑤
8. Choosing what activities to learn English in the lessons?	Teacher	①	②	③	④	⑤
	Students	①	②	③	④	⑤
9. Deciding how long to spend on each activity in class?	Teacher	①	②	③	④	⑤
	Students	①	②	③	④	⑤
10. Evaluating students' learning?	Teacher	①	②	③	④	⑤
	Students	①	②	③	④	⑤
11. Deciding what students learn outside class?	Teacher	①	②	③	④	⑤
	Students	①	②	③	④	⑤

Section 2: Abilities

(Blacken the appropriate circles)

How would you rate your students' ability to:

	<i>Very poor</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>O.K.</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Very Good</i>
12. Choose learning activities in class?	①	②	③	④	⑤
13. Choose learning activities outside class?	①	②	③	④	⑤
14. Choose learning objectives in class?	①	②	③	④	⑤
15. Choose learning objectives outside class?	①	②	③	④	⑤
16. Choose learning materials in class?	①	②	③	④	⑤
17. Choose learning materials outside class?	①	②	③	④	⑤
18. Evaluate their learning?	①	②	③	④	⑤
19. Evaluate the course?	①	②	③	④	⑤
20. Identify their weaknesses in English?	①	②	③	④	⑤
21. Decide what they should learn next in your English lessons?	①	②	③	④	⑤
22. Decide how long to spend on each activity in class?	①	②	③	④	⑤

Section 3: Autonomy and your teaching

(Please tick the appropriate answers)

23. Do you consider learner autonomy as a goal of your teaching?

a. Yes

b. No

c. I've never thought about it

24. How important do you think learner autonomy is for effective language learning?

a. Not important at all

b. Important

c. Extremely important

Section 4: Activities

25. Please list any teaching activities you do to encourage students to learn autonomously.

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26. Please list any learning activities you recommend to students to encourage them to learn autonomously.

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Many thanks for giving your time to complete the questionnaire.
Your co-operation is much appreciated.

APPENDIX F. PERSPECTIVES ON LEARNER AUTONOMY
QUESTIONNAIRE (PLAQ - Version for Students)

Student's information

Gender: Male / Female Year of study: _____

Course type: 2-year / 3-year / 4-year

Course title (e.g., BA in English): _____.

We are interested in your views of the roles of learners and teachers in second language learning. Please give you opinions as indicated below.

Section 1: Responsibilities

To what extent do you think the teacher and students are responsible for ...:

Bạn nghĩ thế nào về mức độ trách nhiệm của giảng viên và sinh viên đối với

Blacken both 'Teacher & Students' circles/ *Vui lòng tô đen cả phần về giảng viên và sinh viên*

		<i>Not at all Không có</i>	<i>A little Rất ít</i>	<i>Some Phần nào</i>	<i>Mainly Chủ yếu</i>	<i>Completely Hoàn toàn</i>
Example: <i>0. maintaining an English speaking environment in class</i> <i>0. Duy trì môi trường nói tiếng Anh trong lớp</i>	<i>Teacher</i>	①	②	③	④	⑤
	<i>Students</i>	①	②	③	④	⑤
1. Students' progress during lessons? <i>Sự tiến bộ trong lớp của sinh viên</i>	<i>Teacher</i>	①	②	③	④	⑤
	<i>Students</i>	①	②	③	④	⑤
2. Students' progress outside class? <i>Sự tiến bộ ngoài lớp của sinh viên</i>	<i>Teacher</i>	①	②	③	④	⑤
	<i>Students</i>	①	②	③	④	⑤
3. Students' interest in learning English? <i>Cảm hứng học tiếng Anh của sinh viên</i>	<i>Teacher</i>	①	②	③	④	⑤
	<i>Students</i>	①	②	③	④	⑤
4. Students' working harder? <i>Việc sinh viên học chăm hơn</i>	<i>Teacher</i>	①	②	③	④	⑤
	<i>Students</i>	①	②	③	④	⑤
5. Identifying students' weaknesses in English? <i>Xác định điểm yếu của sinh viên trong việc học tiếng Anh</i>	<i>Teacher</i>	①	②	③	④	⑤
	<i>Students</i>	①	②	③	④	⑤
6. Setting learning goals for students for their English course? <i>Đưa ra mục tiêu học tập cho sinh viên trong môn học tiếng Anh</i>	<i>Teacher</i>	①	②	③	④	⑤
	<i>Students</i>	①	②	③	④	⑤
7. Deciding what should be learned in English lessons? <i>Quyết định nội dung bài học tiếng Anh</i>	<i>Teacher</i>	①	②	③	④	⑤
	<i>Students</i>	①	②	③	④	⑤

8. Choosing what activities to learn English in the lessons? <i>Chọn hoạt động học tập trong bài học tiếng Anh</i>	Teacher	①	②	③	④	⑤
	Students	①	②	③	④	⑤
9. Deciding how long to spend on each activity in class? <i>Quyết định kéo dài hoạt động trong bao lâu</i>	Teacher	①	②	③	④	⑤
	Students	①	②	③	④	⑤
10. Evaluating students' learning? <i>Đánh giá kết quả học tập của sinh viên</i>	Teacher	①	②	③	④	⑤
	Students	①	②	③	④	⑤
11. Deciding what students learn outside class? <i>Quyết định sinh viên nên học gì ngoài lớp</i>	Teacher	①	②	③	④	⑤
	Students	①	②	③	④	⑤

Section 2: Abilities

How would you rate your ability to:

Bạn đánh giá khả năng của mình như thế nào trong việc

Blacken the appropriate circles / *Vui lòng tô đen câu trả lời*

	Very Poor Rất Kém	Poor Kém	O.K. Được	Good Tốt	Very Good Rất tốt
12. Choose learning activities in class? <i>Chọn hoạt động học tập trong lớp</i>	①	②	③	④	⑤
13. Choose learning activities outside class? <i>Chọn hoạt động học tập ngoài lớp</i>	①	②	③	④	⑤
14. Choose learning objectives in class? <i>Chọn mục tiêu học tập trong lớp</i>	①	②	③	④	⑤
15. Choose learning objectives outside class? <i>Chọn mục tiêu học tập ngoài lớp</i>	①	②	③	④	⑤
16. Choose learning materials in class? <i>Chọn tài liệu học tập trong lớp</i>	①	②	③	④	⑤
17. Choose learning materials outside class? <i>Chọn tài liệu học tập ngoài lớp</i>	①	②	③	④	⑤
18. Evaluate your learning? <i>Đánh giá việc học của mình</i>	①	②	③	④	⑤
19. Evaluate the course? <i>Đánh giá khóa (môn) học</i>	①	②	③	④	⑤
20. Identify your weaknesses in English? <i>Xác định điểm yếu của mình trong tiếng Anh</i>	①	②	③	④	⑤
21. Decide what you should learn next in your English lessons? <i>Quyết định nội dung sẽ học trong bài học tiếng Anh</i>	①	②	③	④	⑤
22. Decide how long to spend on each activity in class? <i>Quyết định thời gian cho các hoạt động học tiếng Anh</i>	①	②	③	④	⑤
23. Plan your learning? <i>Lên kế hoạch học tập</i>	①	②	③	④	⑤
24. Set your learning goals <i>Xác định mục tiêu học tập</i>	①	②	③	④	⑤

APPENDIX G. FOCUS GROUP QUESTION SCHEDULE

Facilitator: Quynh Le

Participant: Group of 4-6 students

Time: 30-45 minutes

Venue: the University

1. What do you think is the difference between learning English in high school and in the university?
2. Do you think your English classes prepare you for autonomous learning? If not, should they?
3. This is a list of 5 roles that most students strongly believe to be the responsibilities of teachers according to the results of the RFAQ. Do you agree? Do you have any comments?
4. This is a list of 5 roles that most students strongly believe to be their responsibilities according to the results of the RFAQ. Can you explain why these were chosen?
5. Are there any other teachers'/students' roles that you feel important but were not mentioned in the questionnaire?
6. What do you think you can do to be better at English?
7. This is a list of 5 self-initiated learning activities that most students engage in. Why do you think these activities are popular among students? Why do you think other activities are not preferred?

**APPENDIX H. FOLLOW-UP TEACHER'S QUESTIONNAIRE ON
LEARNER AUTONOMY adapted from Chan (2003)**

1. What do you understand by 'learner autonomy'?
2. Do you consider learner autonomy important? Why? Why not?
3. Do you do anything to encourage students to become more autonomous in or outside the classroom? What?
4. What are your most important roles as a teacher?
5. In general, what do your students think are the teacher's most important roles?
6. In general, how good are students in Hochiminh City at learning English autonomously?
7. Does the teaching and learning environment in Vietnam help or hinder the development of autonomy? In what ways?

APPENDIX I. LEARNING CONTRACT (Adapted from McGrath, 2006)

Objectives

My language learning objectives for the second part of this semester are as follows:

- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....
- 4.....

Action plan

My action plan for achieving these objectives is shown below:

	Objective/Focus	How I plan to achieve this goal ...	When will I do the work ...	How often and how long it will take ...	Achieved	Evidence
1						
2						
3						
4						

I will work conscientiously to achieve these goals.

.....(signed)

.....(date)

APPENDIX J. LEARNING DIARY

Name of student:

Class:

Week: / /2010 -

 / /2010

Date/ Time	Activity/ Programme	Task Aims	Brief Content Summary	Problems	Strategies	Self-Assessment

APPENDIX K. SAMPLE FOCUS GROUP TRANSCRIPTS (FC 2)

Q represents the interviewer. All interviewees' names are pseudonyms.

Q3: Roles of teachers

We have just shared opinions about the most valuable and the least valuable experience in learning English. Now we should move to Question 3: when studying in the University, what would you expect your teachers' role to be? What do you think they should do?

HOANG

My expectation, perhaps, is from the most valuable experience. It means that I like to study proactively. Just like others said, proactive learning facilitates me to learn things more deeply and remember them longer. Thus, I expect my English teacher to, first, let learners read books before coming to class. This is old-fashioned anyway. If the English teacher could estimate the levels of their students, they would know which useful information to provide us. "Useful" here could mean "new" or "the most popular mistakes we usually make". Second, learners should be encouraged to learn English autonomously and inspired in learning English. Third, teachers should give learners more exercises to practise. I don't like teachers to repeat old and boring things over and over although I know teachers just want to reassure that their students understand things thoroughly by mentioning them again and again. But, let them figure things out on their own might be more interesting. If someone still relies too much on teachers, they should reconsider their methods. They should read instead of waiting to be explained by their teachers. It wasted too much time. It is quite simple. I don't mean they are lazy or less intelligent. I think just because they get used to that way doesn't mean that they can't start changing.

KIM

On the contrary, I don't like the idea of self-learning because I might be lazy sometimes. I get stressed easily and like to sleep. Thus, I need my teachers to give me a lot of exercises so that I have motivation to work. Moreover, those exercises might help me realise my weaknesses which I can seek advice from my teachers to improve them later on. Then, I would find more related information. If teachers don't give exercises to practise, I will have a lot of spare time that I have no idea how to use. I would lose direction in learning.

TRUONG

I agree with others that teachers should have a certain method to encourage learner autonomy. However, I still think that increasing "compulsory" is necessary. Because, for me, with a little more pressure, I could do things better. I also observe some phenomena happening in class. If a group was assigned to do a presentation on a grammar point, only that group would engage in that issue. The rest of the class wouldn't care much about that. Normally, they nonchalantly think of doing non-compulsory exercises. If their answers are wrong, it's not the end of the world. If they are right, it's not a big deal either. With that thought in mind, the knowledge that assigned group presents wouldn't leave any trail in our heads.

LUC

I don't think that the audience wasn't interested in learning but the problem lies in the ways of communication of the delivering groups. There are many groups presented so well that I could remember what they told us quite long even that info wasn't worth/ important at all. By contrast, there are many groups had wonderful information but the way they share it was so bored. How could on earth we can learn anything from that? If you use the same tone to talk from the beginning and on every matter, I don't care whether you are presenting earth-shaking information or not; I am gonna bolt out of the room in a flash.

TRUONG

Regarding to the presentation skills of students, I think it's a different matter. My point is we have to have a different approach to engage the whole class in that issue. Not only the presenting group but everybody in the class as a whole needs to learn and understand that particular grammar point thoroughly. One of the reasons those delivering groups felt discouraged, I think, is that we didn't do our homework. When we hadn't prepared ourselves beforehand, how could we concentrate on what they are talking about?

LAM

We couldn't follow where they went.

ALL STUDENTS

That's right.

TRUONG

So, I couldn't think of any solutions yet; but I insist on putting more pressure on them. Then...

PHUONG

learning contract

TRUONG

Not that. To be honest, our teacher's learning contract is not strictly enough.

PHUONG

The credits will be included in our final credits.

TRUONG

I know it. But I haven't done it seriously myself. Although I did read, did try to follow it but I didn't write. Besides, I always think that everything will be done eventually. So I normally let them pile up and then rush to listen at them at once. It is not really effective.

Q4: Comments on statistics about teachers' roles

We now move to Question 4, all right everybody? The survey on 200 students from all batches gives me some statistic. Their questionnaire is that same with what you did in class.

Here are some duties that students assumed should be their teachers'. Should be their roles. "Point out my weaknesses in English" is among them (4.07).

TRUONG

4.07 is out of how much, Sir?

Q

4.07. Here is that scale. 1 is strongly disagree, 2 is disagree and so on. This is the average points of 200 answers.

Second role is "helping me make progress during lessons". Third is "explaining why we are doing an activity". Fourth is "helping me make progress outside classes". And fifth is "stimulating my interest in learning English". Do you have any comments? Which points do you agree with? Agree or disagree? Or do you have any other contribution?

TRUONG

I think whoever can do this is superman.

PHUONG

perfect

TRUONG

I really think that.

Q

Does that mean you think it rarely happens when a teacher can do all of those? However, do you consider those points are important to you? Do you agree with those? Or, for example, "help me make progress outside class", according to the result of the survey on 35 teachers, is supposed to be the students' task. Put simply, when being asked about their opinions on the share of duty between theirs and their students' on "students' progress outside class", most of the interviewees indicated that should be the main responsibility of students while the teachers' role is at "some" only.

LAM

I think this is just because of the different perspective between ours and the teachers'. For example, helping us to progress outside class could be giving us exercises requiring us to be more active, in need of researching information and go to some places that might help us to gain knowledge and develop our skills. That is the difference between our opinions and the teachers' on this matter. Helping us just like that, not actually be on site and guiding us in every small step.

TRUONG

Extra-curricular activities.

**APPENDIX L. APPROACHES TO IMPLEMENTING LEARNER
TRAINING (Sinclair 2000a)**

TEACHER – LEARNER DIRECTEDNESS CONTINUUM

Teacher-directed	Teacher-guided / learner-decided	Learner-directed
Teaching of discrete sets of cognitive behaviour;	Teacher-guided discovery by learner of personally suitable learner strategies.	Learner-directed discovery of personally suitable learning strategies.
Definite, pre-planned syllabus of training.	Systematic. Objectives partly pre-planned, partly negotiated over time.	Syllabus is not pre-planned, but negotiated and organic.
Objectives based on demands of learning situation.	Objectives based on needs of learners.	Group and individual learner responsibility for all learning decisions.
Learners all do the same thing at the same time.	Class activities lead to individual learners taking responsibility for final learning decisions.	Learners do what they want to do.
Teacher controls all aspects of learning.	Teacher acts as guide.	Teacher acts as facilitator.
Emphasis on improvement of product.	Explicit focus on the processes of learning.	Implicit focus on the processes of learning.

Figure 1 Approaches to implementing learner training (Sinclair 2000)

APPENDIX M. LISTENING AND SPEAKING 3 (INTENSIVE) SYLLABUS

A. Course Specification

- Course Title: **Listening and Speaking 3**
- Course ID: ANH 203DV02
- Total Contact Hours: 56 periods
 - Lecture Hours: 28
 - Practice Hours: 14
 - Home work: 14
- Semester Credits: 3
- Self-study Hours: 100

B. Pre-requisites

None

Required prior knowledge

Completion of Listening and Speaking 2 (ANH102D) is required.

C. Course Description

This course aims to train students for academic success. Students learn how to listen to lectures and take notes effectively, and to communicate with other students in group discussions. Through the use of engaging lectures presented via DVD, students experience the demands and atmosphere of a real college classroom. The lectures also include elements of natural speech to aid students in recognizing and deciphering language that might otherwise distract them from the meaningful content of a lecture. This preparation enables students to listen, take notes, and discuss ideas independently and confidently.

D. Course Objectives

With the purpose of improving students' listening and speaking skills for academic use of language, this course will

1. Enhance focus on integrating academic listening and speaking strategies
2. Develop students' knowledge of core academic areas: Business, Humanities, and Science
3. Enable students to participate fully and smoothly in classroom discussion
4. Provide students listening strategies for recognizing and tuning in to verbal and nonverbal language markers typically used by professors in the lecture setting
5. Promote students' ability to manage information intake
6. Gain a familiarity with the vocabulary, lecture language, and atmosphere of a real classroom

E. Learning Outcomes

Successfully completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Have a better understanding of themed lectures that align with core academic content areas:
 - Strategies for independently preparing for each stage of the listening process – before a lecture, during a lecture, and after a lecture
 - Strategies for recognizing “lecture language” – the discourse markers, speech features, and lexical bundles that lecturers across disciplines commonly use to guide students in taking in information:

- + Recognize lecture language that introduces the topic and presents a lecture plan
 - + Recognize lecture language that signals a transition between ideas in a lecture
 - + Recognize lecture language for generalizations and support
 - + Recognize lecture language that signals repetition of information for clarification or emphasis
 - + Recognize lecture language that signals causes and effects
 - + Recognize lecture language that helps you predict causes and effects
 - + Recognize lecture language that signals comparisons and contrasts
 - + Recognize non-verbal signals that indicate when information is important
 - + Recognize lecture language that signals a definition
 - + Recognize lecture language that signals citations-paraphrases and quotations
2. Become an active and confident member of a classroom discussion:
 - Contribute ideas in a discussion
 - Interrupt and ask for clarification during a discussion
 - Ask for more information during a discussion
 - Agree and disagree during a discussion
 - Support opinions during a discussion
 - Encourage other students to participate during a discussion
 - Bring a group to a consensus during a discussion
 - Expand on your own ideas during the discussion
 - Keep the discussion on topic
 - Support your ideas by paraphrasing and quoting others
 3. Build up vocabulary:
 - Learn and practice key vocabulary selected from the Academic Word List
 4. Learn about and practice useful methods for taking effective notes during a lecture class:
 - Organize your notes by outlining
 - Use symbols and abbreviations
 - Use your notes to give a spoken summary of a lecture
 - Practice noting key words in a lecture
 - Use a split-page to organize your notes
 - Note causes and effects
 - Note comparisons and contrasts
 - Represent information in list form
 5. Learner autonomy: learners will be able to
 - *Identify their learning needs and learning styles*
 - *Understand their strengths and weaknesses in language learning*
 - *Set realistic learning goals and make plans to achieve them*
 - *Monitor and evaluate learning progress*
 - *Use learning strategies effectively for self-directed language learning*
 - *Become confident and motivated in taking responsibility for learning*
 - *Become more aware of linguistic aspects of English and the learning process.*

F. Teaching Methods

The instructor will achieve these objectives by having students:

1. Listen to CDs or watch DVDs with academic lectures in class or on their own.

2. Make use of the course content and experiences to interact with others in pair work, small group work and whole class activities.
3. Focus their attention the accurate and concise recording of material delivered during a lecture, activate prior knowledge, and cultivate critical thinking to have better listening comprehension
4. Enhance self-study (listening to supplementary materials, watching DVDs, etc.) in order to have an opportunity to go beyond what is presented in the textbook.
5. Be well-prepared prior to class.
6. Complete all assigned tasks well.
7. Discuss and present ideas, opinions in pair, group or individually.

G. Learning Materials

1. Required Textbooks and Materials

Laurie Frazier & Shalle Leeming (2007), *Lecture Ready 3: Strategies for Academic Listening, Note-taking, and Discussion*, Oxford.

2. Suggested Course Material for self-study

Joan Saslow & Allen Ascher (2007), *Summit 2*, Longman Pearson
 Gail Ellis & Barbara Sinclair (1989), *Learning to learn English*, CUP

3. Useful website

- <http://www.uefap.com>
- <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~acskills/success/notes.html>
- <http://www.esl-lab.com>

H. Assessment Methods

Components	Forms	Duration	Percentage	Time
<i>Assignment 1</i>	<i>Learning diary (individual)</i>	<i>10 minutes</i>	<i>10%</i>	<i>Week 2 - 14</i>
<i>Assignment 2</i>	<i>Group presentation</i>	<i>10 minutes</i>	<i>20%</i>	<i>Week 2 - 14</i>
Mid-term	Listening - Lecture (including 3 parts: note-taking, gap-filling / marking True or False / answering questions / multiple choices / etc) - Level of difficulty: Inter - Topics covered from Units 1-2	30 minutes	20%	Week 8
Final	1. Speaking - Group discussion & Presentation - Topics covered from Units 1 - 5	10 minutes	25%	Week 15
	2. Listening - Lecture (including 4 parts: note-taking, gap-filling / marking True or False / answering questions / multiple choices / etc) - Level of difficulty: Inter - Topics covered from Units 1 – 5	40minutes	25%	Scheduled by the Training and Student Management Dept

- **Speaking Evaluation Criteria**

Evaluation Criteria	
Pronunciation, intonation, stress	20%
Vocabulary and grammar	20%
Content	30%
Fluency	20%
Communicative ability	10%

I. Teaching Staff

Lữ Văn Tuấn (contact details hidden as per research ethics requirements)

Lê Xuân Quỳnh (lxquynh@hoasen.edu.vn)

J. Learning Schedule

Duration: 14 weeks

Number of periods per week: 4

Week	Topics	Textbook	Students' assignments	Learner training	Activities
1	<p>Unit 1: BUSINESS</p> <p>Chapter 1: New Trends in Marketing Research</p> <p>Build Background Knowledge Prepare to Listen and Take Notes Listen and Take Notes</p>	p.2	Unit Wrap - Up (p.22)	Learners' Beliefs and Learning Styles	<p>Discussion: <i>What do you feel about learning English?</i></p> <p>Listening: <i>Learners' experience</i></p> <p>Quiz: <i>How do you prefer to learn English?</i></p>
2	<p>Chapter 1: New Trends in Marketing Research</p> <p>Discuss the Issues</p> <p>Chapter 2: Business Ethics</p> <p>Build Background Knowledge Prepare to Listen and Take Notes</p>	p.10 p.12	Unit Wrap - Up (p.22)	Learners' needs and goal setting	<p>Discussion: <i>why do you want to learn English?</i></p> <p>Survey: <i>What is your current level? What do you need to improve?</i></p> <p>Discussion: <i>What might affect your motivation in learning English?</i></p>
3	<p>Chapter 2: Business Ethics</p> <p>Listen and Take Notes Discuss the Issues</p>	p.18	Unit Wrap - Up (p.22)	Learning contract Learning materials	<p>Pair work: <i>Discuss your learning plans</i></p> <p>Discussion: <i>What makes a good dictionary?</i></p> <p>Using <i>Index to find grammar points.</i></p> <p>Worksheet: <i>Dictionary skills</i></p>

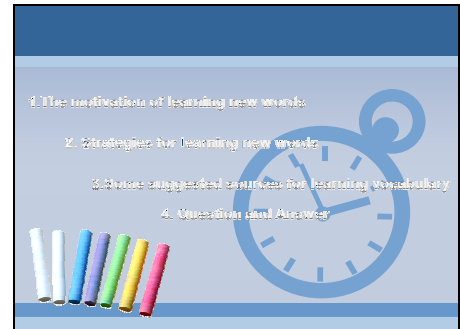
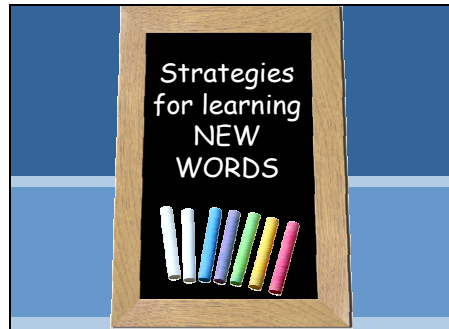
4	Unit 2: MEDIA STUDIES Chapter 3: Trends in Children's Media Use Build Background Knowledge Prepare to Listen and Take Notes Listen and Take Notes	p.23	Unit Wrap - Up (p.44)	Learning resources	<i>Discussion: What resources are available to learners of English in Hochiminh city?</i> <i>Introduction to time management and learning strategies</i> <i>Presentation: How to use electronic dictionaries</i>
5	Chapter 3: Trends in Children's Media Use Discuss the Issues Chapter 4: The Changing Music Industry Build Background Knowledge Prepare to Listen and Take Notes	p.32 p.34	Unit Wrap - Up (p.44)	Extending vocabulary	<i>Discussion: knowing a word</i> <i>Presentation: strategies for learning new words</i> <i>Exercises for practicing vocabulary learning</i>
6	Chapter 4: The Changing Music Industry Listen and Take Notes Discuss the Issues	p.37	Unit Wrap - Up (p.44)	Extending (cont) vocabulary	<i>Pair work: Using a dictionary to find collocations</i> <i>Organizing vocabulary learning.</i> <i>Game: What can you do if you don't know a word?</i>
7	Unit 3: SCIENCE Chapter 5: The Placebo Effect Build Background Knowledge Prepare to Listen and Take Notes Listen and Take Notes	p.46	Unit Wrap - Up (p.66)	Dealing with grammar	<i>Discussion: What do you feel about learning grammar?</i> <i>How similar is the grammar of Vietnamese compared with the grammar of English?</i> <i>Presentation: Strategies for learning grammar</i> <i>Practice: Seeing patterns</i>
8	MID-TERM TEST				

<p>9</p> <p>Chapter 5: The Placebo Effect Discuss the Issues</p> <p>Chapter 6: Intelligent Machines Build Background Knowledge Prepare to Listen and Take Notes</p>	<p>p.54</p> <p>p.56</p> <p>p.58</p>	<p>Unit Wrap - Up (p.66)</p>	<p><i>Improving listening skills</i></p>	<p><i>Discussion: What are your difficulties in listening to English?</i> <i>Awareness raising: Listen for English intonation</i> <i>Listening practice: Reasons for listening</i> <i>Presentation: strategies for practicing Listening</i></p>
<p>10</p> <p>Chapter 6: Intelligent Machines Listen and Take Notes Discuss the Issues</p>	<p>p.62</p> <p>p.64</p>	<p>Unit Wrap - Up (p.66)</p>	<p><i>Improving speaking skills</i></p>	<p><i>Discussion: Are you confident in speaking English?</i> <i>Video: variety of English</i> <i>Pronunciation: difficult sounds</i> <i>Listening: word stress and sentence stress</i></p>
<p>11</p> <p>Unit 4: Psychology Chapter 7: Sibling Relationship Build Background Knowledge Prepare to Listen and Take Notes Listen and Take Notes</p>	<p>p.68</p>	<p>Unit Wrap - Up (p.88)</p>	<p><i>Improving speaking skills (cont)</i></p>	<p><i>Speaking: Changing sentence stress to change meaning</i> <i>Listening: assessing accuracy vs fluency</i> <i>Presentation: Ways to learn pronunciation and practice speaking</i> <i>Activity: Communicative strategies</i></p>
<p>12</p> <p>Chapter 7: Sibling Relationship Discuss the Issues</p> <p>Chapter 8: Multiple Intelligences Build Background Knowledge Prepare to Listen and Take Notes</p>	<p>p.76</p> <p>p.78</p>	<p>Unit Wrap - Up (p.88)</p>	<p><i>Improving reading skills</i></p>	<p><i>Discussion: How often do you read in English?</i> <i>Reading: The advantages of reading in chunks</i> <i>Presentation: Reading strategies</i> <i>Practice: Guessing unknown words</i></p>

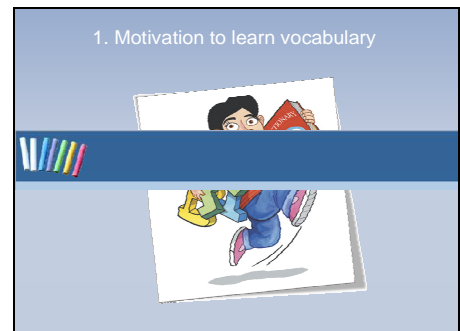
13	<p>Chapter 8: Multiple Intelligences Listen and Take Notes Discuss the Issues</p>	<p>p.84 p.86</p>	<p>Unit Wrap - Up (p.88)</p>	<p>Improving writing skills</p>	<p>Predicting <i>Discussion: How do you feel about writing in English?</i> <i>Activity: compare writing texts</i> <i>Presentation: Strategies and resources for improving writing skills</i> <i>Writing: Correcting a piece of writing</i></p>
14	<p>EXTRA LISTENING AND SPEAKING ACTIVITIES</p>				
15	<p>REVISION FINAL SPEAKING TEST</p>				

APPENDIX N. STUDENTS' PRESENTATION: STRATEGIES FOR LEARNING NEW WORDS

Slides
1-2



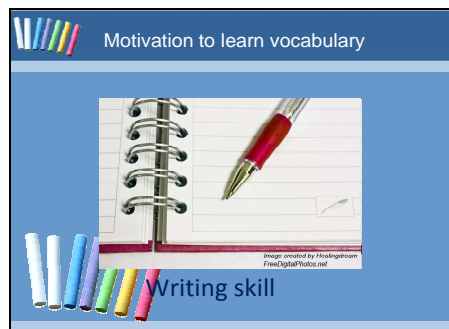
Slides
3-4



Slides
5-6



Slides
7-8



Slides
9-10



Motivation to learn vocabulary

International language
→ travel, work, study, high salary, etc.



Motivation to learn vocabulary

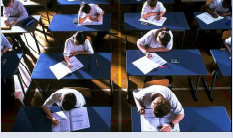

Pressure



Slides
11-12

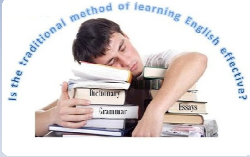
Motivation to learn vocabulary

Pressure



Motivation to learn vocabulary

Is the traditional method of learning English effective?



Slides
13-14

2. Strategies for learning new words

FLASH CARDS



Strategies for learning new words

On the front

Designed to write the new words, transliteration and word-class



Slides
15-16

Strategies for learning new words

On the back

Record definite meaning in English, usage tips, examples, and explain in Vietnamese



Strategies for learning new words

Advantage

- Learners can bring every time, every where
- User-friendly, scientific and effective method

Difficulty

- Take some time to create card

Slides
17-18

Strategies for learning new words

WORD MAPS

Strategies for learning new words

Collocation

- There are some words that can combine to a phrase.
- Learning this way, you can understand how to use and combine the words better.
- For example:

Slides
19-20

Strategies for learning new words

Hyponymy

With these diagrams above, whenever you have new words which are in the same group, you can add them to your suitable diagrams.

Strategies for learning new words

Antonym

<u>cheap</u>	<u>wide</u>	<u>honest</u>	<u>attack</u>
expensive	narrow	dishonest	defend

Slides
21-22

Strategies for learning new words

The advantages of using word maps, diagram with hyponymy and antonym:

- ✓ Learn new words from one "master word";
- ✓ Rearrange words that have similar meaning;
- ✓ Easy to learn and remember;

Strategies for learning new words

Clines

- ✓ Many adjectives mean a property of a thing, event or phenomenon.
- ✓ Writing and learning new words base on clines is also a way to learn vocabulary.
- ✓ Example: a series of adjectives that range from low to high temperature

Slides
23-24

Strategies for learning new words

The advantages of using word maps, charts, diagrams, etc.

- Remembering new words by pictures is easier than letters.
- These methods also help us to take the initiative in speech.

** Note: You also can use various color in your new-word diagram and remember to take note them tidily.*

The story of an ant family

Slides
25-26

LANDLADY

ANT

Slides
27-28

Answer:

TEN ANTS

A tenant is someone who pays rent for the place they live in, or for land or buildings that they use.

➔ The landlady has to get money from the tenants.

Slides
29-30

Strategies for learning new words

SPLIT AND JOIN

Strategies for learning new words

STEPS TO REMEMBER

- ✓ Split the new word into basic words you have already known (they are not necessary to spell exactly the same as the split words);
- ✓ Create a story or image between these basic words that relates to the meaning of the new word;

Slides
31-32

Strategies for learning new words

1. BERATE: If you berate someone, you speak to them angrily about something they have done wrong.

BERATE = BE-A-RAT

STORY: A fairy BERATEs the naughty boy with the curse: "BE A RAT!"

Strategies for learning new words

2. EGREGIOUS: very bad indeed


EGREGIOUS = EGG REACH US

STORY: Our presentation is so bad that EGGS from the audience start to REACH US.

Slides 33-34


Strategies for learning new words

ADVANTAGES AND DIFFICULTS



- Remember for long time
- Useful to learn rare words
- Stimulate your imagination
- Take time
- Cannot remember how to spell correctly

3. Sources for learning new words



Slides 35-36

3. Websites for learning new words

- <http://www.waystoenglish.com>
- <http://www.vocabulary.co.il/>
- <http://www.vocabulary.com/>

Websites for learning new words



<http://www.waystoenglish.com>

Slides 37-38

Websites for learning new words



<http://www.vocabulary.co.il/>

Websites for learning new words

How well do you know your adjective antonyms? Test your skill here!

Link boxes. Connect the words on the left to its antonym on the right.

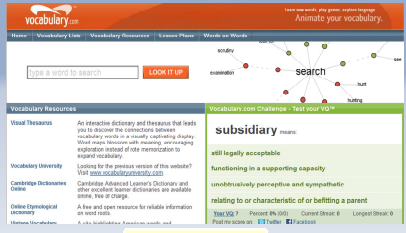
dependable	unreliable
earnest	neutral
humorous	unimaginative
creative	cheerful
bizarre	serious
independent	destructive
abnormal	dependent

Try Again

<http://www.vocabulary.co.il/>

Slides 39-40

Websites for learning new words



<http://www.vocabulary.com/>

Websites for learning new words

Vocabulary Word of the Day

Mysterious Past Word of the Day: Friday, October 23rd

snug

Your etymological instincts may tell you that this word, because of its small compact shape and initial consonant combo, is more likely to be Germanic than Romance. You're right! Just how Germanic, however, isn't entirely clear. It's the sort of word whose origins etymologists must guess with "probably" or "perhaps." There are two main schools: those connecting it with an Old Norse word for "short-haired," and those connecting it with Low German and Dutch origins.

Vocabulary Tools

VocabGrabber

Spelling Bee

<http://www.vocabulary.com/>

APPENDIX O. PRINCIPLES FOR LEARNER TRAINING (Adapted from Hsu, 2005)

	Principles	Authors
1	<p>Informed and explicit The purpose, aims and value of learner training should be informed and explicit to the students. The trainer should also reveal the whole programme to the students as much as possible, including what, how, and why of the training.</p>	Sinclair (2000a) Wenden (1991)
2	<p>Diagnostic The training content (i.e., subject matter, strategies and attitudes) should be based on the needs and language proficiency of the students.</p>	Ellis and Sinclair (1989) Holec (1981) Wenden (1991)
3	<p>Interactive The teacher is expected to work with the learners until they show evidence of being able to work alone. Peer work and group work can facilitate learning.</p>	Dam and Legenhausen (1996) Legenhausen (2003) Wenden (1991)
4	<p>Self-regulated Students are trained to regulate their own learning, i.e., self-planning, self-monitoring, and self-evaluating without the teacher.</p>	Dickinson (1992) Wenden (1991) Dam (1995)
5	<p>Contextualised (cultural) Training should be in the context of the subject matter content. Students' cultural traits should be taken into account.</p>	Sinclair (2000a) Wenden (1991)
6	<p>Task-based Task-based activities provide simulation for genuine communication and task activity and achievement are motivational (Richard and Rodgers, 2001: 229). An integration of the trendiest approach to language learning with learner autonomy may be the way to go.</p>	Scharle and Szabó (2000) Wenden (1991)

7	<p>Reflective Reflection upon learning helps to monitor and evaluate own learning and consolidate learnt knowledge and skills and facilitate the forming of positive attitudes and sustained motivation.</p>	<p>Ellis and Sinclair (1989) Legenhausen (2003) Little <i>et al.</i> (2002) O'Rourke and Schwienhorst (2003) Ridley (2003)</p>
8	<p>Authentic The use of authentic material and language increase language input and help to cultivate integrative motivation. (However, there are some occasions when the learner's mother tongue is more appropriate, if the focus is on attitude change or difficult concepts).</p>	<p>Dam (1999) Dickinson (1992) Dam and Legenhausen (1996)</p>
9	<p>Individualised Learners' individual differences should be catered for so that the learners can find and choose the most suitable way of learning.</p>	<p>Dam and Legenhausen (1996) Ellis and Sinclair (1989)</p>
10	<p>Empowered Learners should be empowered in terms of building up self-belief and self-efficacy to face the challenge ahead, as change is not an easy job (to transform self into an autonomous agent)</p>	<p>Little <i>et al.</i> (2002)</p>
11	<p>Role changing Learners are expected to change their roles in the traditional classroom from merely receivers to negotiators, and to decision-makers. Also, learners are also expected to undergo role changing during the course of training.</p>	<p>Dam (1995) Scharle and Szabó (2000) Sinclair (2000a)</p>

APPENDIX P. LEARNER TRAINING LESSON PLAN: SESSION 2 (LEARNERS' NEEDS AND GOAL SETTING)

Duration: 60 minutes

Objectives: After this session, learners will

- Be able to specify their purposes in learning English
- Analyse and prioritise their own needs
- Assess their own ability so as to set achievable learning goals
- be willing to use learning contract as a tool to help them plan, monitor and assess their learning

Time	Content/Aims	Activities	Aids	Notes/ Assessment																										
15'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learners' needs 	<p>Activities</p> <p><i>Individual: Learners use the list reasons for learning English that they have prepared to make a list of specific situations where you need to use English.</i></p> <p><i>T: In the last session, we talked about our beliefs and attitudes about learning English. We also discussed possible effective ways to learn English. From these activities and the learning style quiz, you have learned that people have different learning styles and preferences. Now I'd like you to work on your own and think of the reasons why you need or want to learn English. Then, make a list of specific situations where you need to use English.</i></p> <p><i>(After 5 mins) Work in pairs, tell your partner the reasons you want to learn English. Discuss the list of situations and agree on the skills needed for each situation using worksheet 1. Do any of the situations require presentation skill?</i></p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin-top: 10px;"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2" style="width: 15%;">Situations</th> <th colspan="5" style="text-align: center;">Skills</th> </tr> <tr> <th style="width: 15%;">Vocabulary</th> <th style="width: 15%;">Grammar</th> <th style="width: 15%;">Listening</th> <th style="width: 15%;">Speaking</th> <th style="width: 15%;">Reading</th> <th style="width: 15%;">Writing</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;">e.g., Youth hotel reception desk</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;">- Welcoming new guest</td> <td style="text-align: center;">√</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">√</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Situations	Skills					Vocabulary	Grammar	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	e.g., Youth hotel reception desk							- Welcoming new guest	√			√				
Situations	Skills																													
	Vocabulary	Grammar	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing																								
e.g., Youth hotel reception desk																														
- Welcoming new guest	√			√																										

- Prioritising one's needs
- Self-assessment and goal setting

T: Now you have identified your purposes in learning English and the situations where you need to use the language. Think of the aspects of language you need in each situation and your current ability. Use **worksheet 2** to decide whether you have reached the level needed for each aspect.

Extending vocabulary	Dealing with grammar	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
1	1	1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5	5	5

(After 3 mins) Now compare your worksheet with a partner and discuss your choice. Think of the following questions and complete **worksheet 3**:

1. Which aspect of English do you think you have reached the level needed?
2. Which aspect needs improving urgently?

Skill	Priority rating
Extending vocabulary	
Dealing with grammar	
Listening	
Speaking	
Reading	
Writing	

Elicit learners' response in terms of aspects of English that they think they need to improve most urgently. Group learners according to these aspects e.g., grammar, vocabulary, listening, reading, writing, speaking. Sometimes learners can be encouraged to look into the aspect that second most urgently needs improving so that every aspect is covered. Ask learners to work in groups of 4 (maximum 5) and discuss the questions:

3. What improvements do I wish to make in this aspect of English?
 4. What can I do to achieve these goals?
- After discussion, each group will present their goals and means to achieve them. Notify learners that they may keep the group to work towards the final presentation at the end of the course, where they will present their learning needs, the different ways they have done to make improvements and their achievements.

10'	<p>- Understanding motivation</p> <p>- Use of learning diary</p>	<p><i>T: During your study, there is some time you feel more interested and motivated than other. Work in groups of 4-5 and discuss these questions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>How do you feel now? Why?</i> - <i>How did you feel yesterday? Why?</i> - <i>What things might affect your motivation during this course?</i> <p><i>Using a learning diary can help you keep track of your learning objectives, your learning process, your achievement and your motivation.</i></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date/Time</th> <th>Objective</th> <th>Activity</th> <th>Problems/Solution</th> <th>Comment (feelings, etc)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Date/Time	Objective	Activity	Problems/Solution	Comment (feelings, etc)											
Date/Time	Objective	Activity	Problems/Solution	Comment (feelings, etc)														
	<p>- Homework</p>	<p><i>T: At home each of you should review your purposes in learning English and prioritise aspects of English you want to improve. Use the learning contract to set your learning goals and plan your actions. When we meet next time, bring in your learning contract to discuss with the teacher. After that, the contract will be kept as the guidelines for your study in this course. In order to carry out the learning plan in your learning contract, you will need to organise your study and consider the resources available. Think about the amount of time you can devote to learning English, the materials you have and resources you can use to improve the aspect of English of your choice. Bring along your dictionaries, grammar books and any reference materials you would like to discuss to the next session.</i></p>	<p>Learning contract (McGrath 2006)</p>															

APPENDIX Q. RELIABILITY ANALYSIS OF INDIVIDUAL ITEMS (RFAQ)

	Cronbach's α if item deleted
TR: In my opinion, the role of the teacher is to give me regular tests to evaluate my learning	.729
TR: I need the teacher to set learning goals for me	.730
TR: It is the teacher's responsibility to create opportunities for me to practise	.717
TR: I need the teacher to stimulate my interest in learning English	.717
TR: The teacher needs to point out my weaknesses in English	.724
TR: I'd like the teacher to help me make progress outside class	.724
TR: The role of the teacher is to make me work hard	.727
TR: I think the teacher's responsibility is to decide what I should learn in English lessons	.725
TR: I think the teacher is responsible for explaining why we are doing an activity	.720
TR: I need the teacher to help me make progress during lessons	.721
TR: I need the teacher to choose activities for me to learn English	.719
TR: I think the role of the teacher is to explain grammar and vocabulary	.726
TR: In my opinion, the teacher should decide how long I spend on activities	.731
TR: I think the teacher should decide what activities I do to learn English outside class	.723
TR: In my opinion, the role of the teacher is to provide answers to all my questions	.716
ADR: I like to be able to choose my own materials for English classes	.734
ADR: I like teachers who give us a lot of opportunities to learn on our own	.722
ADR: I dislike being told how I should learn	.735
ADR: I think teachers should give us opportunities to select what we like to learn	.727
ADR: Language learning involves a lot of self-study	.727
ADR: I think teachers should give us opportunities to decide where and how to learn	.731
ADR: I enjoy tasks where I can learn on my own	.724
MKKS: I know the best ways to learn and practise English for me	.719
MKKS: I know my strengths and weaknesses	.730
MKLP: I try new ways/strategies of learning English	.726
MKLP: I can explain why I need English	.724
MKKS: I enjoy learning English	.724
MKLP: I am able to measure my progress	.721
MKLP: I am able to find resources for learning English on my own	.719
MKKS: I know my learning style and use it effectively	.725
MKLP: I can set my own learning goals	.724
MKLP: I plan my learning	.726
MKLP: I can check my work for mistakes	.724
MKKS: I think I have the ability to learn English well	.723
MKLP: I ask for help in learning English when I need it	.729
MKKS: I am not confident about my English ability	.745

APPENDIX R. RELIABILITY ANALYSIS OF ADR FACTOR (RFAQ)

I. Reliability statistics of the 8-item ADR scale

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's alpha	No of items
.589	8

Item-Total Statistics

	Cronbach's α if item deleted
ADR: I like to be able to choose my own materials for English classes	.568
ADR: I like teachers who give us a lot of opportunities to learn on our own	.521
ADR: I dislike being told how I should learn	.548
ADR: I think teachers should give us opportunities to select what we like to learn	.539
ARD: I think teachers should give us opportunities to decide where and how to learn	.568
ARD: I enjoy tasks where I can learn on my own	.533
ADR: Language learning involves a lot of self-study	.574
ADR: I think I could not improve without a teacher	.598

II. Reliability statistics of the 9-item ADR scale

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's alpha	No. of items
.627	9

Item-Total Statistics

	Cronbach's α if item deleted
ADR: I like to be able to choose my own materials for English classes	.619
ADR: I like teachers who give us a lot of opportunities to learn on our own	.591
ADR: I dislike being told how I should learn	.594
ADR: I think teachers should give us opportunities to select what we like to learn	.566
ARD: I think teachers should give us opportunities to decide where and how to learn	.600
ARD: I enjoy tasks where I can learn on my own	.578
ADR: Language learning involves a lot of self-study	.610
MKKS: I think I have the ability to learn English well	.604
MKLP: I try new ways/strategies of learning English	.620

**APPENDIX S. NON-PARAMETRIC ITEM COMPARISON BETWEEN
COHORT AND INTERVENTION GROUP (pre-intervention)**

Item	Group	M	N	SD	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Sig.
TR: In my opinion, the role of the teacher is to give me regular tests to evaluate my learning	Cohort	2.98	211	1.005	.376	
	Intervention	3.14	21	.964		
	Total	3.00	232	1.000		
TR: I need the teacher to set learning goals for me	Cohort	3.15	211	1.139	.062	
	Intervention	2.67	21	1.065		
	Total	3.10	232	1.139		
TR: It is the teacher's responsibility to create opportunities for me to practise	Cohort	2.95	211	1.057	.300	
	Intervention	3.14	21	1.014		
	Total	2.97	232	1.052		
TR: I need the teacher to stimulate my interest in learning English	Cohort	3.84	213	1.025	.398	
	Intervention	4.00	21	1.095		
	Total	3.85	234	1.030		
TR: The teacher needs to point out my weaknesses in English	Cohort	4.07	212	.885	.181	
	Intervention	4.29	21	.956		
	Total	4.09	233	.891		
TR: I'd like the teacher to help me make progress outside class	Cohort	3.85	213	.826	.219	
	Intervention	4.05	21	.973		
	Total	3.87	234	.839		
TR: The role of the teacher is to make me work hard	Cohort	3.43	210	.972	.601	
	Intervention	3.52	21	1.123		
	Total	3.44	231	.984		
TR: I think the teacher is responsible for explaining why we are doing an activity	Cohort	3.86	212	.712	.211	
	Intervention	4.05	21	.805		
	Total	3.88	233	.721		
TR: I think the teacher's responsibility is to decide what I should learn in English lessons	Cohort	2.92	211	.827	.757	
	Intervention	2.86	21	.964		
	Total	2.91	232	.838		
TR: I need the teacher to help me make progress during lessons	Cohort	3.89	211	.782	.968	
	Intervention	3.90	20	.852		
	Total	3.89	231	.787		
TR: I think the role of the teacher is to explain grammar and vocabulary	Cohort	3.54	211	.863	.775	
	Intervention	3.48	21	.814		
	Total	3.53	232	.857		
TR: I need the teacher to choose activities for me to learn English	Cohort	3.08	210	.863	.285	
	Intervention	3.29	21	.845		
	Total	3.10	231	.862		

Item	Group	Mean	N	SD	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Sig.
TR: In my opinion, the teacher should decide how long I spend on activities	Cohort	3.00	212	.926	.390	
	Intervention	3.19	21	.750		
	Total	3.02	233	.912		
TR: I think the teacher should decide what activities I do to learn English outside class	Cohort	3.17	212	.916	.389	
	Intervention	3.43	21	1.363		
	Total	3.19	233	.964		
TR: In my opinion, the role of the teacher is to provide answers to all my questions	Cohort	3.79	212	.966	.743	
	Intervention	3.62	21	1.203		
	Total	3.78	233	.988		
ADR: I like to be able to choose my own materials for English classes	Cohort	3.51	209	.905	.144	
	Intervention	3.19	21	.814		
	Total	3.48	230	.900		
ADR: I like teachers who give us a lot of opportunities to learn on our own	Cohort	3.63	211	.826	.009	P<0.01
	Intervention	4.10	21	.625		
	Total	3.67	232	.820		
ADR: I dislike being told how I should learn	Cohort	3.61	213	.973	.017	P<0.05
	Intervention	3.05	21	.973		
	Total	3.56	234	.984		
ADR: I think teachers should give us opportunities to select what we like to learn	Cohort	3.88	213	.761	.013	P<0.05
	Intervention	3.43	21	.811		
	Total	3.84	234	.775		
ADR: Language learning involves a lot of self-study	Cohort	4.47	212	.611	.033	P<0.05
	Intervention	4.76	21	.436		
	Total	4.49	233	.603		
ADR: I think teachers should give us opportunities to decide where and how to learn	Cohort	3.60	209	.815	.247	
	Intervention	3.81	21	.750		
	Total	3.62	230	.810		
ADR: I enjoy tasks where I can learn on my own	Cohort	3.85	209	.718	.320	
	Intervention	4.00	21	.632		
	Total	3.86	230	.710		
MKKS: I know the best ways to learn and practise English for me	Cohort	3.23	210	.977	.457	
	Intervention	3.10	21	1.136		
	Total	3.22	231	.991		
MKKS: I know my strengths and weaknesses	Cohort	3.99	208	.739	.813	
	Intervention	3.95	21	.740		
	Total	3.98	229	.737		
MKLP: I try new ways/strategies of learning English	Cohort	3.44	213	.747	.617	
	Intervention	3.33	21	.966		
	Total	3.43	234	.768		

Item	Group	Mean	N	SD	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Sig.
MKLP: I can explain why I need English	Cohort	4.30	212	.675	.124	
	Intervention	4.52	21	.602		
	Total	4.32	233	.671		
MKKS: I enjoy learning English	Cohort	4.33	211	.698	.094	
	Intervention	4.57	21	.676		
	Total	4.35	232	.699		
MKKS: I am not confident about my English ability	Cohort	2.68	212	1.098	.884	
	Intervention	2.67	21	1.155		
	Total	2.68	233	1.100		
MKLP: I am able to measure my progress	Cohort	3.36	211	.817	.020	P<0.05
	Intervention	2.90	21	.944		
	Total	3.31	232	.838		
MKLP: I am able to find resources for learning English on my own	Cohort	3.31	208	.919	.529	
	Intervention	3.48	21	.814		
	Total	3.33	229	.909		
MKKS: I know my learning style and use it effectively	Cohort	3.40	213	.822	.910	
	Intervention	3.38	21	.865		
	Total	3.40	234	.824		
MKLP: I can set my own learning goals	Cohort	3.52	210	.765	.801	
	Intervention	3.43	21	.870		
	Total	3.52	231	.774		
MKLP: I plan my learning	Cohort	3.47	210	.837	.475	
	Intervention	3.33	21	.856		
	Total	3.46	231	.838		
MKLP: I can check my work for mistakes	Cohort	2.90	212	.854	.051	
	Intervention	2.48	21	.814		
	Total	2.86	233	.857		
MKKS: I think I have the ability to learn English well	Cohort	3.86	210	.735	.638	
	Intervention	3.95	21	.590		
	Total	3.87	231	.723		
MKLP: I ask for help in learning English when I need it	Cohort	3.78	212	.779	.148	
	Intervention	4.00	21	.894		
	Total	3.80	233	.790		

**APPENDIX T. STUDENTS' FOCUS GROUP TREE NODES CODED IN
NVIVO**

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Sources	References	
Students' focus groups	Perception of teachers' roles	Provide guidance	3	13	
		Force me to learn	3	10	
		Create opportunities	3	10	
		Point out students strengths and weaknesses	1	6	
		Stimulate interest in learning	2	5	
		Provide information on subjects	3	5	
		Supporting	2	4	
		Motivate students	2	4	
		Offer choices	2	2	
		Listen to learners' opinions	1	2	
		Help students make progress outside class	1	2	
		Help learners make progress outside class	1	2	
		Care for students	1	2	
		Understand students' needs	1	1	
		Introducing materials	1	1	
		Explain the purpose of exercise	1	1	
		Comments	1	1	
		Choose activity	1	1	
		Preference for autonomous learning	Taking the initiative	2	7
			Creating opportunities for oneself	2	5
	Deciding what and how to learn		2	5	
	Preparing for lessons by reading		2	4	
	Setting one's learning objectives		3	3	
	Taking responsibility		2	3	
	Less teacher involvement		1	1	
	Making suggestions		1	1	
	Preferring to work on one's own		1	1	
	Motivation for learning English	Enjoy learning English	3	11	
		Job opportunities	2	4	
		Success in learning	2	4	
		Admiration of others	2	3	
		From teacher	1	2	
		Parents' will	2	2	
		Existing environment	1	1	
		Study abroad	1	1	
	Teachers' control	Against	3	11	
		For	3	10	
	Students' awareness of learner autonomy		3	20	
	Motivating learning experience	Challenging assignments	1	6	
		Independence	1	3	
Encouragement		2	2		
Usefulness		2	2		
Opportunity for practice		1	2		
Teacher's inspiration		1	1		
Autonomy in Vietnamese tertiary context		3	15		

**APPENDIX U. TEACHERS' INTERVIEW TREE NODES CODED IN
NVIVO**

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Sources	References
Teachers' interviews	Teachers' views of their roles and responsibilities	Being a facilitator	1	4
		Stimulate learning outside class	1	2
		Teacher cannot push students to work harder	1	1
	Teachers' perceptions of students: expectation, ability, roles and requirements	Teachers' expected roles	3	6
		Students can be autonomous if they are made aware of LA and its benefits	3	4
		Students are not autonomous at the time of speaking	4	10
		Students need teachers' guidance to perform LA activities	3	3
		Students' effort is needed to promote LA	2	2
	Teachers' understanding of learner autonomy	Students can do self-study	4	7
		Students are motivated	3	5
		Students take the initiative in learning	3	5
		Students display metacognitive ability	2	4
	Teachers' view of learner autonomy in Vietnam	Institutional constraints	5	12
		Cultural factors	3	4
		Educational methodology	1	2
	Teachers' practice in promoting learner autonomy	How to promote learner autonomy	6	12
		Assessment of their own teaching	1	3
Teachers' perceptions of control in the classroom	Teachers' control of classroom activities	3	8	
	Students' control of classroom activities	1	3	

**APPENDIX V. THE SEVEN-POINT RATING SCALE USED FOR
EVALUATION (Lai, 2001)**

Please circle your choice 0 = Definitely not 6 = Definitely yes

1	The long-term goal(s) is/are relevant.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	The long-term goal(s) is/are specific.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	The short-term goal(s) is/are relevant.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
4	The short-term goal(s) is/are specific.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	The short-term goal(s) is/are realist.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
6	The materials chosen are specific.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	The materials chosen are adequate.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
8	The materials chosen are relevant to achieving the goals.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
9	The skills to practice are specific.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
10	The skills to practice are conducive to achieving the goals.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
11	The activities to engage in are conducive to achieving the goals.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
12	The types of assignments are conducive to achieving the goals.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
13	The approach is specific enough to proceed with personal learning.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
14	The forms for overall assessment are defined specifically.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
15	The forms of assessment hat (<i>sic</i>) included or implied criteria for conducting self-assessment	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
16	The personal course design has internal coherence	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
17	The personal course design practicable (<i>sic</i>)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

APPENDIX W. LEARNING CONTRACT CHECKLIST

Student's name: _____

Rater: _____

OBJECTIVES	Are the learning objectives set in the learning contract	
	- vague?	
	- general but acceptable?	
	- specific and realistic?	
ACTION PLAN	Is the action plan designed in the learning contract	
	- vague?	
	- including some specific activities?	
	- including specific activities and relevant materials?	

APPENDIX X. LEARNING DIARY RATING SCALE

Student's name: _____

Rater: _____

		Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Aims	Rating															
1. The task aim(s) is/are realistically set for the type of learning activity chosen;	0															
	1															
	2															
	3															
	4															
2. The aim(s) is/are directly related to specific aspects of skills or strategies belong to the learning activity.	0															
	1															
	2															
	3															
	4															
Strategies																
3. The strategies are specific and relevant to the learning activity;	0															
	1															
	2															
	3															
	4															
4. The strategies chosen are conducive to the obtainment of the task aims.	0															
	1															
	2															
	3															
	4															
Self-assessment																
5. The self-assessment directly addresses the set aim(s);	0															
	1															
	2															
	3															
	4															
6. The self-assessment specifically addresses the learner's learning process or performance.	0															
	1															
	2															
	3															
	4															

**Adapted from Lai, 2001*

APPENDIX Y. STUDENTS' INTERVIEW TREE NODES CODED IN NVIVO

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Sources	References
Students' interview	Assessment of the course		5	5
	Assessment of the influence of learning contract and learning diary	Help remember what has been learned	2	2
		Improve English	2	2
		Increase autonomy	1	1
		Increase confidence	2	3
		Provide a useful tool for studying	9	10
		Provide exposure to English	3	4
		Provide motivation	8	9
		Provide something to follow	4	4
		Maybe useful	2	2
		Autonomous learning behaviour	Adjust objectives and contract	6
	Evaluating strategies		2	2
	Problem solving		3	5
	Sustain effort		4	4
	Try different learning strategies		4	5
	Disadvantages	Lack of motivation	4	4
		Time constraint	6	6
		Tiredness	1	1
	Future use of learning contract and learning diary	Actual plan	10	11
		No	6	7
		Reasons	0	0
		Yes	9	9
	Objectives	Grammar	4	4
		Listening	22	22
		Reading	8	8
		Speaking	12	12
		Vocabulary	6	6
		Writing	6	6
	Self-assessment	Satisfactory improvement	11	17
		Unsatisfactory improvement	5	5
	Learning strategies	Grammar	2	2
		Listening	15	19
Reading		4	5	
Speaking		7	8	
Vocabulary		8	10	
Writing		5	6	
Students' reaction	negative	2	2	
	positive	3	6	