

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter will first review related literature in order to provide the theoretical background of the study. Second, learner autonomy, which has a close association with learner independence for this study except one aspect, i.e. defining contents, and its components will be explored. Third, learner training and preparations for being independent and autonomous learners will be investigated. Fourth, a discussion of supporting learners to learn independently will be done. Fifth, web-based instruction and independent learning will be discussed. Sixth, levels of English proficiency which is another independent variable of this study will be explored. Seventh, English reading skills and independent learning are discussed, followed by the part on the present study discussing classifications of degrees of support for learner independence. Chapter summary is the final part of the chapter.

2.1 Related Theories

This part will review the theories that are related to this present study, i.e. the learner-centredness theory, and the theory of learner autonomy.

2.1.1 Learner-Centredness

The term 'learner-centredness' has emerged in the field of language teaching with positive perspectives, and it is the direction for language teaching. According to Tudor (1996), the perspectives on learner-centred language teaching are based on two major components. The first is that it is necessary for language teacher to realise that language learners are complex and varied as human beings, and work with them in individual and in social and cultural terms. The second is that language teaching signifies an educational attempt to empower learners by making them able to take responsibility for their own language learning, which relates to their life goals. Empowerment of learners is considered as the ultimate goal in learner-centred teaching with crucial implications for the teacher. Benson and Voller (1997) point out that in learner-centredness, language teaching moves away from the transmission of knowledge (the language) towards language learning as the active production of knowledge. Meanwhile, it is prone to emphasise methods of learning rather than

methods of teaching. Therefore, in the view of Tudor (1996) in order for effective language teaching to occur, teaching structure needs to be made in relation to the needs, characteristics and expectations of learners, and learners must be encouraged to be active participants. Moreover, there must be a desire to seek the practical means for enhancing learners involvement in their language study on a day-to-day teaching practice basis.

Based on the belief that learners are self-directed and responsible decision makers, 'learner-centred curriculum' represents the language teaching approach, which sees learners learn in different ways and have different needs and interest. In other words, learner diversity in terms of a variety of psychological, cognitive, and experiential factors is to be constructively acknowledged as a component of decision making in language teaching (Tudor, *ibid.*). Consequently, teachers and language programmes should provide learners with effective learning strategies, help them identify their preferred ways of learning, develop skills for curriculum negotiation, encourage them to set their own learning objectives and adopt realistic goals and time frames, and develop self-evaluation skills (Richards, 2002).

The learner-centredness perspectives, which emphasize self-directed or autonomous learning grow largely from the ideas addressed by the scholars in the area from humanistic psychology (Brockett and Hiemstra, 1993). Carl Rogers advocates that all human beings have a tendency to move towards completion or fulfilment of potentials (actualising tendency). Individuals have the creative power within themselves to solve problems, change their self-concepts, and become increasingly self-directed. The individuals have the source of psychological growth and maturity within themselves. They do not need to be directed, controlled, or manipulated in order to move towards actualisation because they are the ones who best perceive their experiences as reality and know their reality better than anyone.

2.1.2 Learner Autonomy and Learning Theories

Learner autonomy perspective is one of the focuses in learner-centredness, which is the current practice in language teaching (Tudor, 1996). Benson (1997) discusses learner autonomy and the theories of knowledge of positivism, constructivism, and critical theory. Each theory links to the three versions of autonomy that is technical, psychological, and political version though Benson does make the point that these three versions of autonomy cannot be mapped exactly onto

these three paradigms. Each version is supported by the main approaches to knowledge and learning in the humanities and social sciences. The versions of autonomy are useful as a starting point for the investigation of the relationship between learner autonomy and theories of knowledge and learning.

The 'technical' version of autonomy is defined as the act of learning a language outside the classroom without the intervention of a teacher. Autonomy is seen in terms of situations in which learners are obliged to take charge of their own learning. Therefore, they are prepared to obtain the skills and techniques for their learning beyond the classroom. Learner strategies and learner training are application of this version of autonomy. The 'technical' version corresponds to 'positivism'.

Positivism views that 'knowledge is more or less accurate reflection of objective reality'. Knowledge – whether 'known' or still awaiting discovery – is already given within objective reality' (p. 20). Knowledge is either acquired from a transmission from one person to another, which is a traditional teacher-learner relationship, or is discovered through the hypothesis testing. Moreover, positivism is based on the belief that knowledge acquisition will be more effective if it is 'discovered' rather than 'taught'.

Positivism strongly supports 'teacher-centred' learning model. Learning usually takes place in the classroom. Autonomy is therefore viewed as learning outside the wall of the classroom: a situation that requires a new set of skills for learning management. This shows the link of technical version of autonomy and positivism; consequently, learner strategies and learner training are the applications to promote autonomy. Positivism also supports the notion of independence within the classroom: degrees of learner participation in decision making relevant to their learning. Learner independence in the positivist view advocates the discovery of learning as an effective method to acquire knowledge that is 'already known', rather than a direct knowledge transmission from teacher to learner.

The 'psychological' version of autonomy defines autonomy as a capacity -- a construct of attitude and abilities -- of the learners to be more responsible for their own learning. Autonomy development is an internal transformation within each individual. Situational autonomy can support this process, but the individual will not be dependent on it.

The psychological version of autonomy is supported by 'constructivism' which views that knowledge is the construction of meaning. Knowledge is acquired

by a personal meaning construction system of each learner based on the same objective reality. Therefore, learning is a reorganisation and restructuring of experience rather than a discovery of the existing or predetermined knowledge like the positivism. It is assumed that each learner is able to gain freedom to think and act. In addition, constructivism is likely to appreciate interaction and engagement of learners with the target language. This enhances situational autonomy, which provides opportunities for authentic learning. In terms of autonomy implementation, self-directed learning and self-access are the advisable means.

The last 'political' version of autonomy focuses on issues of control over learning processes and content. Learners are more aware of the social context of their learning and learning constraints.

This version corresponds to the 'critical theory', which puts a great deal of emphasis on the social contexts and constraints within the learning processes. Like the constructivist approach, critical theory views that knowledge is constructed rather than acquired, but it greatly emphasises the social context and constraints within which the learning process takes place. However, unlike positivism, knowledge does not reflect objective reality. Rather, knowledge 'consists of competing ideological version of that reality expressing the interests of different social groups' (p. 22). Learning in this approach is concerned with power – power is knowledge, and control of learners – control of the learning process, resources, and language. Control signifies the 'right' of learners to autonomy.

In control of the management of learning process, it relates to the power relationship between teachers and learners. Teachers have some power to give to learners so that they can make decisions about *what*, *how*, and *why* they learn. Control of resources could cover a wide range of issues such as content of textbooks, learning materials, time, and workload etc. It can be a direct control of resources and a degree of being critically aware of resource constraints. Control of language is close to 'subject matter autonomy', which entails the right of learners to make questions on judgments of any experts.

The critical theory also concerns with the interaction in the social context, which can lead to possible political action and social change. The more the learners are critically aware of their social context of learning, the more degree of autonomy they achieve.

In conclusion, the learner-centredness teaching approach reflects the current practice of learner autonomy, which is the ultimate goal of language learning and teaching. A development of the notion 'learner autonomy' has been seen from three versions of autonomy, i.e. technical, psychological, and political versions which link to the theories of knowledge and learning namely positivism, constructivism, and critical theory respectively. Next section will explore in more detail the concept of learner autonomy.

2.2 What is Learner Autonomy?

This part will deal with the theory of learner autonomy by exploring the terminology used in the field in order to obtain the meanings of autonomy. Then, the components of learner autonomy are investigated, followed by degrees of autonomy and characteristics of autonomous learners. Last, the justifications for promoting learner autonomy are reviewed.

2.2.1 Terminology Overview

The term 'learner autonomy' has been differently defined by many scholars in the field; therefore, it is worthwhile to explore the definitions of learner autonomy. Holec (1981: 3) defines 'autonomy' as 'the ability to take charge of one's own learning'. He further elaborates that the *ability* is not the innate ability, but it can be obtained by formal learning in a systematic manner. This ability which is a power or capacity to do something such as learning does not involve behaviours. Importantly, Holec (p. 3) provides more details on 'to take charge of one's learning' as 'to have, and to hold, the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning, i.e.:

- determine the objectives;
- define the contents and progressions;
- select methods and techniques to be used;
- monitor the procedure of acquisition properly speaking (rhythm, time, place, etc.);
- evaluate what has been acquired.

Benson (2001: 110) describes autonomy as 'the capacity to control over one's own learning', which is very similar to the view of Holec. Dickinson (1987: 11) defines autonomy as 'the situation in which the learner is totally responsible for all of

the decisions concerned with his learning and the implementation of those decisions'. Autonomy involves many aspects; therefore, Benson (1997: 25) states that three basic definitions of language learning autonomy are described, i.e.:

1. autonomy as the act of learning on one's own and the technical ability to do so;
2. autonomy as the internal psychological capacity to self-direct one's own learning;
3. autonomy as control over the content and processes of one's own learning.

Benson elaborates that the first two definitions imply some type of change while the third one relates to a political sense. The view of Benson on autonomy is in relation to the view of Little (1990) who demonstrates that learner autonomy is basically a psychological relation of the learner to the content and learning process. This can be recognised from varying learning behaviours. These behaviours are considered as a capacity to detach, perform critical reflection, make decision, and act independently.

It is noticeable that the term 'autonomy' is dealt with various definitions; therefore, autonomy is semantically various and complex (Little and Dam, 1998). According to Gardner and Miller (1999), there are three reasons. Firstly, autonomy and independent learning have been defined by different writers in different ways. Secondly, since autonomy is an area that is still debated in terms of its definitions, therefore, there is no agreed definition. Thirdly, the concepts of autonomy and independent learning have developed in a variety of geographical areas; consequently, different terminology although similar is used to define the concepts. This is the reason why the terms 'autonomy', 'self-directed learning', 'self-instruction', and 'self-access learning' are used in the field. Tudor (1996) warns that readers should pay attention to the way each author uses the term, and identifies the main ambiguity of the term used. The term 'learner autonomy' is used to refer to either 'a mode of study' or 'a qualitative involvement'. In regard to the mode of study, 'autonomy refers to various forms of independent or self-directed learning involving limited teacher intervention, generally outside a traditional classroom setting' (p. 18). In a qualitative involvement aspect, 'autonomy relates to notions of awareness of learning goals, participation in decision-making, and personal assumption of responsibility' (p. 18). Tudor further states that autonomy in the sense of qualitative involvement has become the vital issue in the field.

It should be of interest to explore what autonomy is *not* for a better understanding of the discussing term. According to Little (1990), autonomy does not refer to these five negatives.

1. Autonomy does **not** have the same meaning as self-instruction. Autonomy does **not** mean learning without a teacher.
2. Autonomy does **not** result in a lack of responsibility on the teacher side in the formal instruction. The learners are **not** let to continue learning as best as they can.
3. Autonomy is **not** another teaching method.
4. Autonomy is **not** a merely behaviour that is easy to describe.
5. Autonomy is **not** steadily achieved by the learners. The learners can gradually be autonomous learners.

Benson and Voller (1997) point out that in language learning, autonomy is used in at least five different ways i.e. situation in which learners study independently, skills that learners can learn and apply in their own learning, capacity that can be developed through learning, responsibility taken by learners for their learning, and the right to give shape and direction of their own learning.

Obviously, apart from the notions of ability or capacity and responsibility involved in defining the term 'autonomy', the idea of 'right' emerges and well reflects freedom to learn (Lynch, 2001). Lynch simply describes autonomy as freedom. Autonomy:

'... is often described in terms of learners' degree of freedom to select, practise and act within the confines of the language teaching instruction, rather than their capacity to continue to learn English in their daily interaction with the academic discourse community' (p. 390-391).

In terms of autonomy as freedom to learn, Little and Dam (1998) assert that freedom has a strong implication on learning since it can be freedom from the teacher's control, from the curriculum's constraints, or from being forced to learn. However, in their view it is the freedom from the learner's self. Learners are capable of being more effective learners no matter what their innate capacity is. It is crucial that each learner is empowered to develop his or her learner autonomy. However, it is noted that although autonomy entails freedoms, it is different in terms of degrees of freedoms (Little, 1990). According to Little (1997), freedom of autonomous learners must be always constrained by dependence of the learners on support and co-operation with other people. Autonomous learning is on the basis of interaction with others, which leads to collaborative learning as a promotion of learner autonomy.

Successful collaboration results from a balanced interaction between freedom and dependence.

Besides the right and freedom to learn autonomously, one more component of autonomy is suggested by Littlewood (1996), that is, willingness. Learners cannot be autonomous relying only on their independent ability. Rather, they need to be willing to take responsibility for their own learning. This is why ability and willingness are the two crucial factors for autonomous learning (Holec, 1981). Willingness can be urged by motivation and confidence. Learners need to be motivated and feel confident to execute their learning on the autonomous basis. It can be seen that the notions of 'ability', 'willingness', and 'motivation' are crucial as the components of autonomy.

2.2.2 Components of Autonomy

According to Wenden (1991), ability and willingness are considered under the notion of 'attitudes' towards learner autonomy. Wenden (*ibid.*: 52) defines attitudes as 'learned motivations', 'valued belief', 'evaluation', 'what one believes is acceptable', or 'responses oriented towards approaching or avoiding'. Attitudes therefore have three components: cognitive, evaluative, and behavioural components.

A cognitive component refers to beliefs, perceptions, information about the object of the attitude, which in language learning could be any learners' beliefs about their role in the learning process or about their capacity as language learners. An evaluative component alludes to the attitudes involving like or dislike, agreement or disagreement, approval or disapproval. For some language learners, they agree that they should take more responsibility for their learning, while others prefer to avoid. Lastly, a behavioural component characterises that attitudes influence people to act in certain ways. For instance, learners who evaluate autonomy positively will try to be more responsible in their learning, while those whose evaluation is negative will not.

Wenden points out that there are two attitudes important to learner autonomy: learners' role in the language learning process, and their capacity as learners. First, autonomous learners are willing to assume responsibility for their learning. They see that they have an important role in their learning. Second, they are self-confident; they believe that they are able to learn and self-direct, or manage their learning. They are capable to work independently without teachers. The concept of learner attitudes towards autonomy is supported by Dickinson (1995) who maintains that learners

should be prepared to take or does take, responsibility for their own learning, especially for decision making about their own learning.

According to Littlewood (1996), autonomy is composed of *ability* and *willingness*, which is the same concept as of Wenden's. However, ability depends on *knowledge* about choices that have to be made from the alternatives, and necessary *skills* for exercising appropriate choices. Willingness depends on having both *motivation* and the *confidence* to take responsibility for the choices required. Clearly, autonomy has a link to motivation.

2.2.2.1 Autonomy and Motivation

A link between autonomy and motivation is the concept strongly supported by Dickinson who maintains that motivation shares some concepts of autonomy that is learner choice, learner independence and learner responsibility (Dickinson, 1995). According to Dornyei (2001), motivation concerns the direction and magnitude of human behaviours that is the *choice* or *why* people decide to do something, the *persistence* with it or *how long* they are willing to maintain it, and the *effort* extended on it, or *how hard* they are going to pursue it. Ushioda (1996) articulates that by definition autonomous learners are motivated learners. Dickinson (1995) asserts that active and independent involvement of learners in their own learning, which is learner autonomy, increases motivation to learn and therefore increases learning effectiveness. 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 their effort.

Motivation can be divided into two categories – intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation concerns doing activity for its own sake, not due to external pressure or reward for doing that task (Dickinson, *ibid.*). In language learning, learners who learn for their own self-perceived needs and goals are intrinsically motivated (Brown, 2000), and those who wish to integrate themselves into the culture of the target language community reflect their intrinsic or integrative motivation (Harmer, 1992). On the contrary, extrinsic motivation refers to learners who may carry out a task for rewards such as money, prizes, grades, or positive feedback, not because of their own interest of learning tasks (Brown, *ibid.*; Dickinson, 1995).

Deci and Ryan (1985 cited in Dickinson, *ibid.*) claim that more effective learning results from intrinsic motivation that is enhanced by having learners

have a measure of self-determination and a locus of control. In regard to the motivation theory, the more effective learning is successfully promoted both through learners with intrinsic motivation and learners performing their learning in autonomy supporting and informational conditions, which leads to intrinsic motivation because learners have self-determination. To elaborate, learners operate their learning in informational structures and experience information events rather than controlling structures and events. In the informational structures, feedback is perceived as useful information for further decision making and for autonomy execution; rather than as threatening their self-determination. By contrast, in the controlling structures learners perceive tests and grades as controlling and do not have a locus of control; rather it rests with the teacher and reduces their self-determination. The distinction between the informational and controlling structures leads to the development of attribution theory.

Clearly, motivation is essential for independent learning and can be enhanced by training learners to build up their behaviour by developing realistic goal setting, planning, personal responsibility, feelings of personal causation and self-confidence, and by being aware of negative feeling. Motivational training helps significant learning improvements (deCharms, 1984 cited in Dickinson, 1995). However, Scharle and Szabo (2000) argue that in order to develop autonomy intrinsic motivation is specially to be encouraged because intrinsic motivation results from some inner drive or interest of the learner. Learners with intrinsic motivation are more able to establish learning goals, which leads to more willingness to take responsibility for their own learning and for the learning outcome. Self-determination and autonomy of the learners, in turn encourage intrinsic motivation. Therefore, motivation and responsibility can mutually reinforce each other. In regard to extrinsic motivation in the forms of rewards and punishment, it can generate learning; however, it causes the increase of learner dependence.

In regard to motivation and responsibility, Dickinson (1995) asserts that in order for learners to take responsibility for their own learning, they must believe that they have control over their success and failure. Consequently, the attribution theory stands out in the area of autonomy and motivation.

2.2.2.2 Attribution Theory

Attribution theory is concerned with the ways in which people explain or attribute the behaviour of others, or themselves (self-attribution). It explores how individuals 'attribute' causes to events and how cognitive perception affects their motivation (Wikipedia, 2006). This theory is advanced by Weiner (1986) who characterises four dominant causes in achievement-related context, i.e. ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck. These four causes are classified into two dimensions, i.e. internal or external to the learners (i.e. they may succeed or fail because of factors that they believe have their origin within them or because of factors that originate in their environment), and stable or unstable causes of success or failure (i.e. if the cause is stable, the outcome tends to be the same if the same behaviour is performed on another occasion. If unstable, the outcome is likely to be different on another occasion). Figure 2.1 portrays a 2x2 categorisation scheme.

	Internal	External
Stable	Ability	Task difficulty
Unstable	Effort	Luck

Figure 2.1: A 2x2 Scheme for the Perceived Causes of Achievement Outcome (Weiner et al., 1971 in Weiner, 1986)

According to Figure 2.1, it can be analysed that:

- **Ability** is a relative *internal* and *stable* factor over which the learner does not exercise much direct control.
- **Task difficulty** is an *external* and *stable* factor that is largely beyond the learner's control.
- **Effort** is an *internal* and *unstable* factor over which the learner can exercise a great deal of control.
- **Luck** is an *external* and *unstable* factor over which the learner exercises very little control.

The basic principle of attribution theory as applying to motivation is that a person's own perceptions or attributions for success or failure determine the amount of effort the person will expend on that activity in the future. Learning success is therefore likely to give rise to greater motivation solely in learners who accept responsibility for their own learning success by recognising that success arises from personal effort, rather than from ability or chance. Personal effort is within the

learners' control, unlike ability or chance. This theory provides evidence to reveal that learners who believe that they control their own learning appear to be more successful than other learners. Accepting new challenges or controlling their learning, learners can increase their learning ability to perform tasks and thus increase their intelligence (Dickinson, 1995). Attributions for events can change learners' learning behaviours.

In conclusion, it can be said that autonomy can be seen as a capacity to take responsibility for being active and independent learners. Moreover, autonomy can be seen as an attitude that learners hold about their role and capacity in language learning process. In addition, autonomy has a close relationship with motivation especially with attribution theory, which increases learning effectiveness as a result. As Dickinson (1987) states, attitude and motivation of learners are of psychological importance to autonomy.

Based on the literature on autonomy and its components, it can be summarised in the diagram in Figure 2.2.

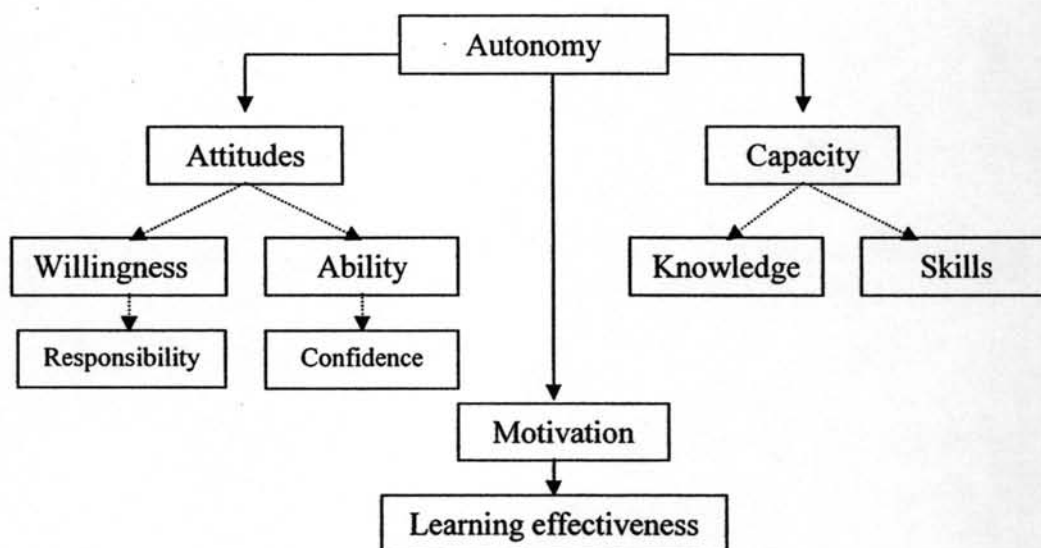


Figure 2.2: Autonomy and Components of Autonomy

2.2.3 Degrees of Autonomy

Learner autonomy can be considered in terms of degrees and there are various levels of autonomy. Little (1990) explains that freedom which is one of the definitions of autonomy is not always at the same level in any learning environment.

Freedom is provisional in different learning contexts due to a variety of factors such as autonomous learning outside or within the full time educational system. Moreover, Dickinson (1987) elaborates that people can be involved in self-instruction which he believes is the means to achieve learning autonomy to various degrees. It can be total autonomy if no teacher is involved at all. It can be semi-autonomy which involves both conventional teaching and self-instruction. In other words, self-instruction can be complementary to a taught course.

Littlewood (1996) also maintains that there are levels of autonomy which can be considered from the level that learners behave when they make independent choices in their own learning. To illustrate the point, high-level choices are at the top and learners can control the activity – they can decide whether to operate that activity or how to determine its direction. In contrast, at the bottom are low-level choices that control some specific performances of the activity. The level of autonomy is less than the former one.

The notion of 'direction' from the teacher is noted here. Teacher-directed learning is still needed by some learners in some certain learning situations. It is also noted that learner autonomy does not mean learner in isolation (Dickinson, 1987; Brockett and Hiemstra, 1993; Little and Dam, 1998). This is why Holec (1981) agrees that different degrees of autonomy result from different degrees of self-direction in learning. While he maintains that 'self-directed learning' implies 'an autonomous learner', autonomous learners may not be able to execute full self-directed learning because it depends on the help the learners obtain during the time that they accept their own learning responsibility. As Littlewood (1999) points out, the fact that learners take responsibility for their independent learning involves taking partial or total ownership of many learning processes that have been in the hand of the teacher. Briefly, degree of autonomy is in relation to degrees of learners' self-directed learning.

In order to foster and gradually increase the degree of autonomy of the learners in a learning programme, Nunan (1997) describes five levels of autonomy implementation in terms of the experiential content domain and learning process domain -- the two main curricular domains. The experiential content domain involves the topics, themes, language functions, and so on which, including the linguistic content domain, establish the syllabus. It deals with *what* students will learn. The learning process domain concerns with methodology, selection, creation, modification

and adaptation of learning tasks and procedures. This domain relates to *how* students will learn. Table 2.1 provides details of the five levels of autonomy implementation.

Table 2.1: Autonomy Levels of Implementation (taken from Nunan, 1997: 195)

<i>Level</i>	<i>Learner action</i>	<i>Content</i>	<i>Process</i>
1	Awareness	Learners are made aware of the pedagogical goals and content of the materials they are using.	Learners identify strategy implications of pedagogical tasks and identify their own preferred styles/strategies.
2	Involvement	Learners are involved in selecting their own goals from a range of alternatives on offer.	Learners make choices among a range of options.
3	Intervention	Learners are involved in modifying and adapting the goals and content of the learning programme.	Learners modify/adapt tasks.
4	Creation	Learners create their own goals and objectives.	Learners create their own tasks.
5	Transcendence	Learners go beyond the classroom and make links between the content of classroom learning and the world beyond.	Learners become teachers and researchers.

From Table 2.1, the learners develop their autonomy from the initial level to deeper level. Finally, they can move beyond the classroom without a support that is provided by the learning arrangement. Nunan points out that the degrees of learners' autonomy development can overlap. They may be able to adapt the material in the early stage and link back and forth between the classroom and beyond the classroom.

Apart from the different degrees of autonomy suggested above, Gardner and Miller (1999) state that degree of learners' autonomy may fluctuate over time from one skill area to another. They exemplify that a degree of autonomy of one learner may be high in listening but that the learner may depend on a teacher in writing. Moreover, levels of autonomy may be different within the same language skill such as reading skills. They explain that there may be three aspects of reading in the development of learner's autonomy. Firstly, needs analysis has developed quickly. Secondly, the learner is willing to choose materials but this has been developed more slowly. However, shortly after this slow developmental stage, the material selection will increase suddenly. Thirdly, the willingness of the learner to accept responsibility for reading assessment has almost never changed. However, the autonomy increased

at one point, but it did not continue, which may be due to a lack of confidence in the reliability of self-assessment of the learner.

It is worthy of note that learner autonomy will result in learning effectiveness if 'there is a balance, or congruence between the learner's level of autonomy and the extent to which opportunity for autonomous learning is possible in a given situation' (Brockett and Hiemstra, 1993: 30). The learners' expectations must be congruent with the conditions of the learning situation. To illustrate the point, if the learners expect high degree of autonomy and the learning conditions facilitate it, the learning outcome will be favourable. Brockett and Hiemstra also point out that degree of guidance and directions from teachers as facilitators must be in line with wants of different learners. If learners who are ready for autonomous learning and want high degree of autonomy, and learners who want low autonomy for their learning and whose level of autonomy readiness is lower than the former, are given the appropriate degrees of autonomy as per they wish, they all will be successful in their learning. Therefore, optimal conditions for autonomous mode of learning must be relevant to the learners' needs and expectations in order to yield successful learning.

Based on the review of related literatures on degrees of learning autonomy, it can be concluded that different learners may want different degrees of learning independence for their learning achievement; therefore, it is plausible to set the hypothesis that different degrees of learner independence have different effects on learning effectiveness of the learners.

2.2.4 Characteristics of Autonomous Learners

Many scholars in the field of autonomous learning identify characteristics of autonomous learners as follows. According to Holec (1985), self-directed learning which is an important aspect of autonomous learning requires the learners to be responsible for their own learning. Characteristics of autonomous learners in terms of responsibility are described by Holec as follows:

Being regarded as general characteristics, responsibility is considered 'static' because the learners have to define every, some or none of their learning programme. This relates to a degree of self-direction or autonomy. Also, the learners determine the organisation of their learning – what and how to learn. In addition, the learners do not have to take responsibility for their learning alone. Support and help can be

gained from others such as other learners and teachers. Secondly, responsibility of autonomous learners can be regarded as 'dynamic' which involves development and change process throughout the learning programme. The learners can be more and more autonomous in making decisions and carrying out evaluation of their learning. They may gradually rely on help and support from outsiders when performing their learning activities.

It is clear that autonomous learners must be active learners. In the view of Little (1990) autonomous learners are able to integrate new knowledge with what they already know (Little, *ibid.*). The process of integration reflects that autonomous learners of second or foreign language are the users of the target language they are learning. Autonomy is the means to use the target language for communication (Little, *ibid.*). Therefore, autonomous learners are active participants in the social learning process. In addition, it is necessary to encourage them to be aware of the learning objectives and processes as well as to be capable of critical reflection skill (Dam, 1990).

Since autonomous learners must have the ability to use the target language for communication, in the view of Crabbe (1993) this important ability can be summarised in three areas. Firstly, learners are able to match a task or activity with a learning purpose. Secondly, learners are able to know causes of their learning difficulties. Thirdly, learners are able to use strategies appropriate for communication achievement or learning goal.

For the autonomous language learners in a language learning classroom, Breen and Mann (1997) describe eight qualities as follows.

1. *The learners' stance* is to see their relationship with what to learn, how to learn, and what resources are available. Autonomy is a way of being in the world, not a process of language learning that can be learned as a set of rules or strategies. Learners have to discover the autonomy by themselves or they may rediscover their autonomous learning ability.

2. *The desire to learn* a particular language is very important for autonomous learners in the classroom. Their desire to learn can be intrinsic or instrumental. This is very much related to motivation. Intrinsic learners are the ones who learn for their own needs and goals, while the instrumental learners pursue a goal merely to receive a reward from someone else or outside and beyond their self (Brown, 2000).

3. Autonomous learners have a *robust sense of self*, which is tended not to be weakened by any negative assessments of themselves or their work by other people involved in the learning process. Assessment can be used as a useful feedback. In contrast, if the assessment is regarded as useless, it can be ignored.

4. *Metacognitive capacity* is essential for autonomous learners because it permits the learners to determine what to learn, when, how, and with whom, and material resources. Moreover, with metacognitive capacity the learners can use any feedback received in a constructive manner.

5. Autonomous learners have an ability of *management of change*. With the metacognitive capacity the learners are allowed to monitor their learning. They are watchful of change and are able to change what they do about their learning in a fruitful way for their learning.

6. *Independence* is reflected in the autonomous learners. They are independent of the educational processes they belong to. Responsibility for instruction is shifted from the teacher to the learner.

7. Autonomous learners have a *strategic engagement with learning*. They can make use of the learning context or environment they are in in a strategic manner. They are capable of choosing the right thing at the right time for the right reasons according to their own criteria.

8. *A capacity to negotiate* is the last quality of autonomous learners. Although they are independent from their learning context, autonomous learners do not learn in isolation. They need to negotiate and collaborate with other people so that they can make best use of the available potential resource in the classroom.

In sum, characteristics of autonomous learners are described differently by different scholars. This may be more or less due to different definitions of the discussed term.

2.2.5 Justifications for Promoting Learner Autonomy

Learning autonomy is a very crucial concept that has widely recognised nowadays by many educational institutes around the world (Crabbe, 1993). Autonomy has in fact been very popular as a concept of discussion in foreign language teaching for many years (Littlewood, 1996). This is because learning autonomy is recognised as an important 'pedagogical goal' (Wenden, 1987) as well as the realisation of individual potential (Sinclair, 1996). Dickinson (1987) also maintains this perspective

but adds that both learning and personal autonomy should be developed as an important educational goal, which is facilitated through self-instruction. Promoting autonomous language learning is considered as an innovative programme (Benson and Lor, 1998). In the views of its advocates, autonomy is a precondition for effective learning. Autonomous learners are better language learners who develop more responsibility and critical thinking (Benson, 2001). It is necessary that the teachers provide opportunities for students to make choices for their learning and make decisions about their learning. In the view of Littlewood (1996), autonomous learners are able and willing to make choices independently. 'Ability' and 'willingness' are therefore the key concepts of autonomy. When gaining more knowledge and skills, students will be more confident to perform independently. Individual involvement in decision making enhances motivation to learn and; consequently, increases learning effectiveness (Dickinson, 1995). The relationship between learning autonomy and learning effectiveness is made clear.

However, Kenny (1993) argues that autonomy in education and language learning reflects empowerment to students, which allows them to have opportunities to generate knowledge. By doing this, students are active, rather than passive learners. Therefore, autonomy is related to self-concept and personal potential realisation more than the ability of the student to make responsible choices. Clearly, there is still a relationship between autonomy and learning effectiveness although it is emphasised in a different view. As Little (1995) points out, in formal language learning context such as schools and universities, successful learners have always been autonomous. However, Crabbe (1993) argues that language learning cannot be guaranteed by formal classroom activities. Success in language learning can be achieved by the opportunities provided for the learners inside and outside the classroom; and the learners make use of those opportunities. Language learners are more likely to operate as independent flexible users of their target language if their classroom experience has already pushed them in this direction (Little, 1995).

There is no doubt why the concept of learning autonomy is viewed important by many scholars. According to Crabbe (1993), in general the importance of autonomous learning is justified by three arguments, i.e. the ideological, psychological, and economic. The ideological argument is that each learner has the right to freely exercise his or her own choices in learning and in other areas. Learners are not forced to choose the choices determined by the institutions. Freedom of the

individuals will lead to a better and stronger society. For the psychological argument, learners can learn better if they take responsibility for their own learning since it will be more meaningful and focused on the learning processes and existing knowledge of each learner. This psychological aspect of the learning will increase learning motivation, which will result in more motivated learners who are likely to be successful in their learning. The economic argument is that learners in every area of learning cannot be provided by the society the resources that are at the right levels of their needs. Therefore, they must be able to provide the resources for their own needs, which may be on an individual or co-operative basis.

Although the importance of autonomy cannot be denied, it is not easy to develop learners to be autonomous since it is a matter of the whole learning process. They need to know how to learn to learn. According to Breen and Mann (1997), pedagogy for autonomy which can be gradually developed is a complex challenge for all teachers who aim for learning autonomy. It is like trying to 'shoot arrows at the sun' (p.133). However, it is worthwhile for all teachers to try. Since autonomous learning is the most desirable goal of any educational system and learning, it is essential for autonomy to be an important factor that every person in the learning workplace enjoys and values. In this way, it is very likely to successfully nurture or foster autonomy in the classroom (Johnson et al., 1990). This view is well supported by Sinclair (1996) who asserts that teachers must accept that learner autonomy cannot be forced, but fostered.

Dickinson (1992) points out six practical ways for the teacher to enhance greater learner independence, i.e. 1) making learning legitimised by showing learners that it is approved by teachers, and by encouraging them to be more independent, 2) convincing learners that they have the ability for greater learning independence, 3) providing learners more opportunities to execute their learning independence, 4) aiding learners to develop learning strategies in order that they can perform their independent learning, 5) aiding learners to have more awareness that language is a system so that they can understand many learning techniques and learn adequate grammar to understand simple reference book, and 6) sharing with learners what teachers know about language learning, such as reactions to learning barriers like all affective problems.

Due to the contribution of learning independence and autonomy to the educational field, no one can deny its advantages to learners. However, learners

cannot suddenly become independent learners by whatever reasons. They need to be trained how to learn in this mode and this will be a focus of the next section. As Tudor (1996) points out, qualitative involvement of the learners in the learning process is a crucial shift from autonomous learning as a mode of learning. Learners need to be prepared to appreciate and value learner independence as a means to learning success.

2.3 Learner Training

Dickinson (1987: 2) states about twenty years ago that:

‘Learners do not achieve autonomy by being told to, nor by being denied conventional class teaching; in these ways they are likely only to achieve failure. Autonomy is achieved slowly, through struggling towards it, through careful training and careful preparation on the teacher’s part as well as on the learner’s, and the first stage in this process is the liberalisation of the classroom to allow them the development of learner independence and learner responsibility’.

It is clear that taking a role of autonomous learner is not easy. Dickinson and Carver (1980) therefore raise the point that only a few successful language learners continue to learn after the end of the course. They also illustrate that language learning is unlike other areas of study particularly the ‘practical’ subjects such as gardening, cooking, or sewing. Language is complex because it involves learning a set of rules and structures. Therefore, Dickinson and Carver write: ‘the person who wishes to continue learning a language independently has to first learn how to do it, and has to build up his or her confidence in their ability to do it’ (p.1). However, as Tudor (1996) points out, not every learner is prepared to participate in the programme development since it requires learners to reflect and invest a lot in their learning. Therefore, a problem of learner resistance to perform independent or autonomous learning occurs (Sheerin, 1991).

Holec (1981) suggests that there are two processes of autonomy acquisition. Firstly, a gradual ‘deconditioning’ process will withdraw all the false perceptions of learning experiences of the learners and their role in language learning. This process deals with the psychological aspect of learners since it aims at changing their attitudes towards learning and their role as well as confidence to make self-assessment of their learning performance. Secondly, acquisition of knowledge and knowledge learners need in order to take responsibility for their learning will be a ‘gradual process of

acquisition'. Learners should learn to use tools such as dictionaries and grammar books. This process is therefore related to the methodological aspect of learners. Holec suggests that these two processes should be conducted in parallel so that learners will gradually proceed from a dependent to independent position. In order to help learners develop themselves to assume their own learning, it is generally agreed that learners need to have preparation and support, which is known as 'learner training' (Sheerin, 1991). Although not the same thing as learner autonomy, learning training is the essential precondition of autonomy.

Dickinson (1992) broadly defines learner training as a training in various strategies of learning, while Ellis and Sinclair (1989) refer to learner training as a way that helps learners become more effective learners of English and take more responsibility for their own learning. This can be done by aiding learners to consider factors that may have an effect on their learning and find the most suitable learning strategies for their learning. Similarly, Tudor (1996) defines learner training as the process to help learners understand more about the nature of learning and acquire skills and knowledge that are necessary to execute their autonomous learning according to their goals. Therefore, learner training involves learners in reflecting on their learning and teachers in evaluating learners' goals, perceptions of these goals, and motivation to learn. Learner training implies teacher-learner interactions. Teachers and learners explore the learning process together. Wenden (2002) uses the term 'learner development' to refer to learner training and defines it as an aim to improve the ability of language learners to learn a language. Wenden also states that learner development is a learner-centred innovation in foreign or second language (FL/SL) instruction.

Although differing in terms of content and emphasis according to the circumstances and intentions of learners, learner training aims at making everyone especially the less effective learner, a better learner and more capable of independent learning. It is the essential preparation for being autonomous learners of whatever degrees (Dickinson, 1992). Learner training involves two types of preparation, i.e. psychological preparation and methodological preparation (Dickinson, 1987).

2.3.1 Psychological Preparation

According to Dickinson (1995), developing greater learning independence is a new idea to language learners. Many of them believe that learning is only directed by

a teacher, which will make a sense of taking learning responsibility for their own learning very difficult. Therefore, psychological preparation is essential and it is divided into three areas.

Changing attitudes

Changing attitudes is the major requirement of this type of preparation, which can be achieved by persuading learners that they are capable of learning more actively and independently. Also, they need to recognise that independent learning is legitimate, feasible, and viable. All this can be successfully executed with the co-operation of the teacher. However, the change of attitudes requires slow development over time.

Dickinson strongly asserts that independent learning resulting from attitude change is far more effective than teacher dependence. Moreover, independent learning related to effective learning is associated with motivation enhancement. All these are cyclically tied together.

Developing confidence

Learners need to be confident in their ability to take greater responsibility for their own learning or to take control of their learning. They should be provided with successful experience of independent learning, which needs to be carefully managed.

Developing self-esteem as a learner

Self-esteem is the learners' belief that they are or are able to become good and effective learners. They feel equal to other learners in class and believe that failure results from inappropriate or insufficient actions or efforts such as wrong use of strategies, or lack of hard work.

Wenden (1991) agrees that it is crucial to include learner attitude towards autonomy in a learner training plan to promote autonomy. Autonomous learners are willing to assume responsibility for their learning and are self-confident in their ability to learn and self-direct or manage their learning. Dickinson (1987 and 1992) states that learners' role needs to be adjusted in the learning process.

One aspect concerning the psychological preparation is that it is necessary that all language learners feel that their learning is purposeful to achieve a success. Purposefulness to some extent relies on the structuring of learning, which is concerned with a statement of clear objectives, learner participation in the realistic

learning programme, encouragement of learners to meet deadline, and feedback about learners' achievement of their learning objectives. In addition, a psychological preparation programme needs to make learners feel that what they are doing and are in charge of in the learning situation is known to their teachers (Dickinson, 1987).

Briefly, it can be said that the psychological preparation contributes to a 'decondition' of all false perceptions of learning experiences of the learners (Holec, 1981). Being helped to develop their positive attitudes towards learner independence implies a development of willingness and motivation to learn independently. As pointed out by Dickinson (1987), a psychological preparation can boost learners' self-motivation to learn and their appreciation of independent learning.

2.3.2 Methodological Preparation

Although learners have positive attitudes towards independent learning, they need to improve their learning efficiency by learning more about how to learn (Dickinson, 1995). This leads to another type of learner preparation; i.e. methodological preparation which is the process to acquire the abilities and techniques learners need for their independent learning. Learners are made aware of the techniques they use implicitly, and then this knowledge is combined with some certain skills that are usually expected in the teacher rather than learners (Dickinson, 1987). Therefore, methodological preparation deals with strategies, which involves helping learners to develop and/or become conscious of cognitive and metacognitive strategies (Dickinson, 1995). Cognitive strategies mainly deal with learning techniques, while metacognitive strategies are referred to as learning management techniques, which includes deciding what to focus on, how long to work, how to check work, and what to do next.

Besides the cognitive and metacognitive strategies, Dickinson (ibid.) includes metacognitive knowledge, which involves language learning awareness -- developing awareness of oneself as a learner and some knowledge of how other people learn languages; and language awareness -- some awareness of language as a system.

Learner training in terms of both psychological and methodological preparations as described by Dickinson (ibid.) is illustrated in Figure 2.3.

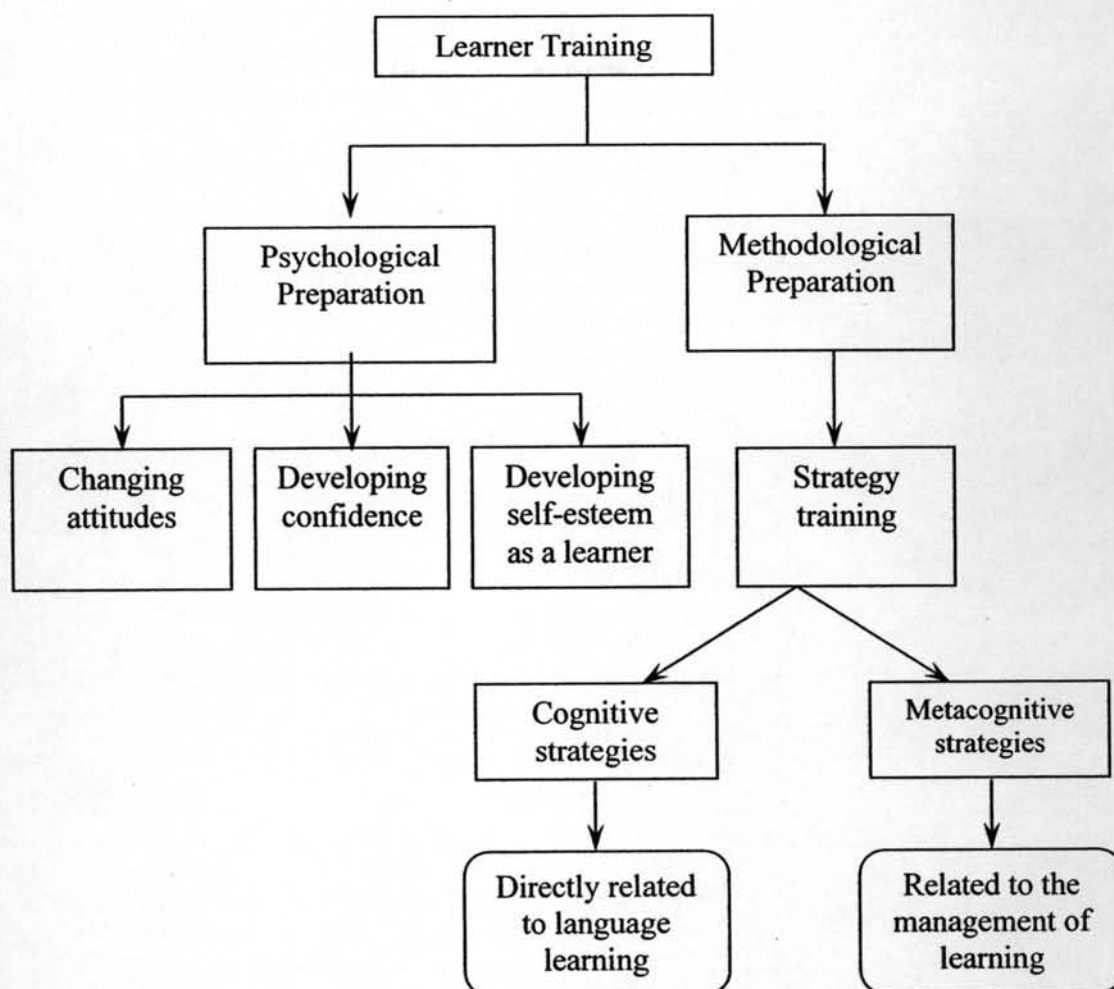


Figure 2.3: Psychological and Methodological Preparation (Dickinson 1995 a)

2.3.2.1 Learning Strategy

The methodological preparation programme emphasises on helping learners develop skills that good language learners bring to language learning. Learners should know how to continue learning a language (Dickinson and Carver, 1980). Therefore, learning strategies used by good or successful language learners are the main focus for this type of learning training. It is certainly worthwhile exploring learning strategies in more details.

It is widely accepted that learning strategies have a very crucial role to play in the context of foreign language learning in order to facilitate and improve students' language. Also, in the field of language learning and teaching over the last twenty years there has been a great emphasis on learners and their learning. Interests have been shown in how learners process new information and what strategies they use to understand, learn, or remember it.

Research into language learning strategies commenced in the 1960's as a shift from a concern with teaching methods to characteristics of learners and their learning process to acquire the language (Wenden, 1987). In particular, the area of language learning strategies has been developed from and influenced by the cognitive theory (Nunan, 1995), which views learners as thinking beings. The cognitive view takes the learner to be an active learner trying to think and make sense of information they are learning (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). This resulted in many researchers interested in this field and they defined the term 'language learning strategies' in various ways.

2.3.2.2 Definitions of Language Learning Strategies

Chamot (1987:71) defines learning strategies as 'techniques, approaches, or deliberate actions that students take in order to facilitate the learning and recall of both linguistic and content area information'. According to Wenden (1987), learner strategies have been profoundly influenced by the field of cognitive science, and referred to as language learning behaviours of learners to learn and regulate the second language learning, learners' knowledge about the learning strategies they use, and learners' knowledge about other aspects of their language learning besides the strategies and these may affect their selection of strategy used. Rubin (ibid.:19) identifies that 'learner strategies include any set of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval and use of information'. Oxford (1990) refers to learning strategies as tools for active, self-directed involvement, which is essential for developing communicative competence. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) define learning strategies as the special thoughts or behaviours that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information. Their view on the learning strategies has been greatly affected by the cognitive theory. Nunan (1995:168) views that 'learning strategies are the neural processes which learners employ to learn and use the target language'.

Clearly, various definitions of the term 'language learning strategies' have been defined by many researchers. As well, as mentioned previously, scholars in the field classify the language learning strategies into different classifications which will be the focus of the next section.

2.3.2.3 Classifications of Language Learning Strategies

Language learning strategies have been classified by many researchers such as Rubin (1987), O'Malley and Chamot (1990), Oxford (1990), and Nunan, (1995). There are about 20 second language (L2) classification systems of the learning strategies. However, the learning strategy classification system applied for the methodological preparation of this study is that of O'Malley and Chamot (1990).

O'Malley and Chamot (ibid.) have a strong view that language learning is related to conscious learning (see McLaughlin, 1990) by applying learning strategies to enhance learners' mastery of the target language. Their view has a strong base from cognitive psychology. They classify learning strategies into three main classes: metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, and social/affective strategies. Metacognitive strategies involve 'thinking about the learning process, planning for learning, monitoring the learning task, and evaluating how well one has learned' (p. 137). Chamot et al. (1999) create the metacognitive model of strategic learning, which consists of four metacognitive processes, that is, planning, monitoring, problem-solving, and evaluation. Under each process there are several strategies that good learners apply for their learning.

Planning strategies

- Set goal (What is my goal for this task? What do I want to be able to do?)
- Directed attention (How can I focus my attention? How can I ignore distractions?)
- Activate background knowledge (What do I already know about this?)
- Predict (What do I think will happen?)
- Organisational planning (What might I need to do? How can I plan for the task?)
- Self-management (How can I best accomplish this task? What do I know best?)

Monitoring strategies

- Ask if it makes sense (Do I understand this? Am I making sense?)
- Selectively attend (What parts should I pay most attention to? Is this information important?)
- Deduction/Induction (Which rules can I apply to help me in this situation?)
- Personalise/contextualise (How does this fit with my experiences?)
- Take notes (What important information can I write down?)
- Use imagery (Can I imagine a situation or draw a picture that will help me understand?)
- Manipulate/act out (Can I use real object or act out the situation to help me do this?)
- Self-talk (I can do this! What strategies can I use to help me?)

- Co-operate (How can I work with others to do this?)

Problem-solving strategies

- Inference (Can I guess what this might mean?)
- Substitute (Is there another word that might fit?)
- Ask questions to clarify (What help do I need? Who can I ask? How should I ask?)
- Use resources (What information do I need? Where can I find more information about this?)

Evaluating strategies

- Verify predictions and guesses (Were my predictions and guesses right? Why or why not?)
- Summarise (What is the gist of this? What is the main idea?)
- Check goals (Did I meet my goal?)
- Evaluate yourself (How well did I do?)
- Evaluate your strategies (Did I choose good strategies? What could I do differently next time?)

Cognitive strategies involve interacting with the material to be learned, manipulating the material mentally and physically, or applying a specific technique to a learning task (Chamot et al., 1999: 138). The following are the cognitive strategies that are the focus for receptive listening and reading comprehension skills.

1. Rehearsal, or repeating the names of items or objects that have been heard;
2. Organisation, or grouping and classifying words, terminology, or concepts according to their semantic or syntactic attributes;
3. Inferencing, or using information in oral text to guess meanings of new linguistic items, predict outcomes, or complete missing parts;
4. Summarising, or intermittently synthesising what one has heard to ensure the information has been retained;
5. Deduction, or applying rules to understand language;
6. Imagery, or using visual images to understand and remember new verbal information;
7. Transfer, using known linguistic information to facilitate a new learning task; and
8. Elaboration, or linking ideas contained in new information or integrating new ideas with known information.

The last categorisation is social/affective strategies which refer to 'a broad grouping that involves either interaction with another person or ideational control over affect' (p. 45). Generally, they are considered applicable to a wide variety of tasks.

It is suggested that learning strategies can be taught in order to improve students' learning or make them become better learners. Therefore, it is important for teachers to teach and promote a use of learning strategies. As Candlin (1991: xi) clearly states that:

Important among these responsibilities is that of consciousness about one's own learning processes and strategies, knowing how one learns. Neither teachers nor learners can take this awareness for granted. It may be cognitively latent, but it needs to be realised into appropriate action: it needs training.

Awareness of use of language learning strategies must be made clear to the learners. As Rubin (1987) and Cohen (1990) suggest, teachers can promote strategy use by providing an environment that helps students adopt the most effective strategies and suggesting alternative strategies so that they can use the most appropriate ones to facilitate their learning. In parallel with O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) idea, a training of strategies to students should be taught directly and integrated with a regular class to promote learning strategies.

Rubin (1987) states that the development of learners' ability to learn independently results from the teacher's role and duty. This is the implication of the learning strategies as a powerful tool to foster learner autonomy. Besides the effect of learning strategies on learner autonomy, the learning strategies when identified could be taught to less successful students as well, which is based on the assumption of Rubin (*ibid.*). Therefore, the teacher can use the learning strategies to teach or train poor learners in order to help them improve their language learning. This is what we call 'learner training' or 'language awareness' in the term of McDonough (1995).

In summary, though language learning strategies are defined and classified differently by many scholars, they are important since they are steps for learners to take to enhance their own learning. Teaching the learning strategies help the learners become better learners. Therefore, the teacher's role and attitudes are very crucial in the aspects of learning strategies.

In conclusion, the theoretical concept of learner training which concentrates both on psychological and methodological preparations demonstrates that it helps learners develop their independence in their learning. Therefore, to successfully foster learner independence, the learner training needs to be seriously taken into consideration. The benefits of the learner training of both psychological and methodological aspects also give an inspiration to the design of this present study that puts emphasis on the learner training to help enhance learner independence and autonomy.

2.4 Supporting the Learner in Independent Learning

In the mode of independent learning, the learners have to take responsibility for their own learning. However, they cannot do so by just being told to by the teacher. The teacher needs to facilitate and support learners' independent learning. This part deals with some ways to support the learners in the independent learning mode. The ideas of learner support were also utilised for this present study.

2.4.1 Roles of Teacher in Independent Learning

Autonomous learning is not based on an assumption that learners need to learn individually and in isolation. Autonomous learning does not free the teacher from providing guidance and support for autonomous learners. The teacher does not take a less important role or have fewer things to do in the autonomous learning mode (Waterhouse, 1990). In contrast, the teacher's role is more vital and innovative compared with the role in the traditional teaching approach. As Little (1990) points out it is not easy for teachers to stop talking because they think it means to stop teaching, which may mean stopping learning. It is therefore not easy for the teachers to change their role from information provider to counsellor and manager of learning resources, and to have learners solve problems by themselves since it requires a lot of effort from the teachers.

It is noticeable that autonomy can be well promoted in the educational context with the help of teachers. However, since individual learners are different and the degrees of autonomous learning depend on a variety of factors, the learners are different in terms of their readiness to execute the autonomous learning. As Brockett and Hiemstra (1993: 10) strongly believe '...it is important to add that individuals will vary in their readiness for self-direction thereby requiring varying degrees of assistance by facilitators, especially as self-directed learning skills are developing'.

It is obvious that teachers can promote learner autonomy by empowering learners to be autonomous. By doing this teachers share and take responsibility with their learners (Johnson et al., 1990). Teachers also believe and trust that learners can be developed to be autonomous (Johnson et al., *ibid.*; Little, 1990; Breen and Mann, 1997). Thomson (1996) even claims that everyone is born a self-directed learner. Little (1990: 34) asserts that:

It is possible for strong and weak learners alike to develop an awareness of their own responsibility for learning and practical knowledge of how to go

about their learning things which doubtless will benefit them in later life, not only in the context of foreign language learning, but possibly also in other contexts.

It is clear that no matter whether the learners are high or low achievers of language learning, they can be autonomous learners. However, teachers must respect without any conditions the ways in which they develop their awareness, conceptions, and intentions of their autonomous learning. Breen and Mann (1997) assert that desire to develop learner autonomy is one of the attributes of the teachers. In other words, the teacher must be autonomous, which is a basic requirement for the development of learner autonomy. Little (1995) exemplifies that the teachers must determine the area for such development. They must determine whether and how it is possible for the learners to set up their learning objectives, choose their own materials, and evaluate their learning. This shows a relationship between the teacher and learners, which is an important and qualifying characteristic that substitutes for the power and authority of the teachers in the traditional mode of instruction (Holec, 1981). One of the teacher's vital roles in the independent learning mode is that of the counsellor.

2.4.2 Teacher as Counsellor

Rogers (1951 cited in Ornstein and Hunkins, 2004: 126) suggests the 'nondirective and therapeutic learning'. This counselling technique is based on humanistic psychology with a concept that therapy is very important as a method of learning. Positive human relationship enables people to grow. A teacher's role in the nondirective teaching is to help and guide students for human growth and development, explore new ideas about their lives, school work, relations with others and interaction with society. Based on the counselling method, it is assumed that learners are willing to take responsibility for their own learning and behaviours. They are able to make intelligent choices and share ideas with the teacher. Therefore, learning is a process not product.

The role of a teacher as a counsellor is especially defined for the learning situation that is more individualised than the classroom situation (Voller, 1997). According to Gremmo and Riley (1995), the counsellor has two main roles. The counsellor has a role to 'help learners develop an adequate set of values, ideas and techniques in the fields of language and language learning' (p.159). In addition, the second role of the counsellor is to 'establish and manage the resource centre which

is central to a self-directed learning system' (p. 159). Clearly, the roles of a counsellor are different from a teacher's roles; therefore, the counsellor should have a new professional competence. Gardner and Miller (1999) state that it is imperative for the counsellors to prepare themselves for giving advice, offering suggestions, or answering questions that require information on various levels when they are asked by the same or different learners. Gardner and Miller also suggest that counsellors use 'referential' type questions when counselling learners. The referential type questions are the questions to which counsellors do not know the answers.

A range of both macro and micro skills language counsellors need is suggested by Kelly (1996) as shown in Tables 2.2 and 2.3.

Table 2.2: Macro-Skills of Language Counselling (taken from Kelly, 1996: 95)

Skills	Description	Purpose
Initiating	Introducing new directions and options	To promote learner focus and reduce uncertainty
Goal-setting	Helping the learner to formulate specific goals and objectives	To enable the learner to focus on a manageable goal
Guiding	Offering advice and information, direction and ideas; suggesting	To help the learner develop alternative strategies
Modelling	Demonstrating target behaviour	To provide examples of knowledge and skills that the learner desires.
Supporting	Providing encouragement and reinforcement	To help the learner persist; create trust; acknowledge and encourage effort
Giving feedback	Expressing a constructive reaction to the learner's effort	To assist the learner's self-awareness and capacity for self-appraisal
Evaluating	Appraising the learner's process and achievement	To acknowledge the significance of the learner's effort and achievement
Linking	Connecting the learner's goals and tasks to wider issues	To help establish the relevance and value of the learner's project
concluding	Bringing a sequence of work to a conclusion	To help the learner establish boundaries and define achievement

Table 2.3: Micro-Skills of Language Counselling (taken from Kelly, 1996: 96)

Skills	Description	Purpose
Attending	Giving the learner your undivided attention	To show respect and interest; to focus on the person
Restating	Repeating in your own words what the learner says	To check your understanding and confirm the learner's meaning
Paraphrasing	Simplifying the learner's statements by focusing on the essence of the message	To clarify the message and to sort out conflicting or confused meanings

Summarising	Bringing together the main elements of the message	To create focus and direction
Questioning	Using open questions to encourage self-exploration	To elicit and stimulate learner disclosure and self-definition
Interpreting	Offering explanations for learner experiences	To provide new perspectives; to help self-understanding
Reflecting feelings	Surfacing the emotional content of learner statements	To show that the whole person has been understood
Empathising	Identifying with the learner's experience and perception	To create a bond of shared understanding
Confronting	Surfacing discrepancies and contradictions in the learner's communication	To deepen self-awareness, particularly of self-defeating behaviour

In order to encourage learners to speak to the counsellors, learners must trust the counsellors; therefore, trust is very important for a good counsellor. Moreover, since counselling implies a one-to-one interaction as pointed out by Voller (1997), the counsellors need to be approachable. Gardner and Miller (1999) therefore recommend two kinds of counselling, i.e. appointments or drop-ins as per the timetabled counselling sessions.

The role as a counsellor is not easy for a teacher because interaction with learners is involved in this new pedagogical role. Not only does the teacher have to find ways to elicit learners' talk, but also the teacher needs to listen carefully. Most importantly, the teachers need to be able to interpret the learners' discourse before giving answers or suggestions (Esch, 1994). Since counselling is an effective way to reduce learning problems or improve learning of the learners, it is essential to provide effective counselling (Gardner and Miller, 1999). Gardner and Miller allude to confidence, comfort, student/teacher relationship, tolerance of errors, and self-awareness as the aspects of effective counselling.

The research project conducted by Cotterall (1995b) to develop a course strategy for learner autonomy is supportive of Dickinson's (1987) view that learners' learning is known to their teacher. Cotterall believes that autonomy is principally enhanced by means of 'dialogue' about learning, which supports the psychological preparation. The research was conducted on the EAP course of twelve weeks at the Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, of which the components were learner/teacher dialogue, learning a language study theme, classroom tasks and materials, student record booklet, and self-access centre.

The dialogue between the class teacher and learners was based on the interviews at the beginning, middle, and end of the course. Each interview had a different focus, i.e. to establish a personal relationship between teacher and learner, to select and clarify objectives, to assess and discuss the learner's progress, and to advise on their further study of English. The dialogue could make learners better understand their language learning experience from sharing ideas with the teacher. This public learning process helps less effective learners learn from others who are more expert and professional. Furthermore, the dialogue helped the teacher convey powerful messages to the learners about their learning responsibility, especially learning activities outside class. However, Cotterall suggests that the teacher should be trained in one-to-one counselling skills since the management of learning dialogue with the aim to transfer learning responsibility to the learners requires considerable skill on the part of the teacher.

In short, it is clear that for each learner learning independently results from the teacher's role and duty, in particular as the counsellor providing help and support. However, in the view of teachers, the concern is not how to produce autonomous learners, but how to help them become autonomous learners based on the autonomy that they have. In other words, autonomy can be fostered, but not taught (Benson, 2001). Success in fostering autonomy in the classroom results in an ability of learners to take responsibility for their learning. Holmes (1990), however, states that before being able to do so, learners must be clear about aims and objectives of their learning, informed about any available materials, be free to select the resources that they deem best suitable for themselves, and be confident that they will be involved in any assessments. Self-assessment is another dimension of learner independence that is worth exploring.

2.4.3 Self-Assessment

In autonomous mode of learning, self-assessment which is the ability to judge one's learning performance based on the established appropriate criteria or standards (Dickinson, 1992), plays a very crucial role. Many writers provide good justifications for self-assessment. Dickinson (1987) discusses two reasons to justify self-assessment justifications. First, self-assessment is necessary for autonomous mode of learning. Learners need to be able to make decisions about their learning such as whether to

continue learning the next item, doing exercise or starting the next unit. Learners also must decide on time allocation for each skill and necessary remedial work. However, these decisions are based on feedback from both formal and informal assessment. Second, learners need to be capable of making self-assessment when they are independent learners of the course.

Dickinson (1992) suggests that self-assessment may involve the following.

- the willingness and motivation of learners to undertake it;
- the willingness to reject insufficient performance (rather than indifference to it);
- some internal standard, either established by learners or learned;
- the ability to measure one's own performance against this standard;
- the confidence to perform these assessments;
- the recognition that one's ability to judge, and the accuracy of the judgment, may be limited.

The aspects of self-assessment suggested by Dickinson reflect well the essential requirement for both psychological and methodological preparations of the learners, i.e. it is a valid and useful activity, and learners need to be able to assess their learning strategies.

According to Harris (1997), self-assessment is a major learning strategy, which enables learners to monitor their progress and relate learning to their individual needs. Therefore, self-assessment is dependent on personal learning objectives of each learner (Sheerin, 1991). Self-assessment promotes active learning and involves learners in the learning process in a reflective manner (Tudor, 1996; Harris, 1997; Gardner and Miller, 1999). Reflection of learners about their learning is recommended to be included in the self-assessment process, which can be done by asking questions such as 'What did you learn from today's class?', 'Did you find this activity useful?', 'Why?' or 'Why not?' (Ellis and Sinclair, 1989).

Lor (1998 cited in Benson, 2001) conducted a case study on learners' reflection on their out-of-class learning project using the format of a written journal. Learners were not pre taught how to write a reflection. Based on what learners wrote, Lor identified six categories, i.e. learning events or situations; the learner's role in the learning process; the learner's feelings about learning and learning events; learning gains; difficulties encountered in the process of learning; and decisions and plans. These six categories were called 'objects of reflection', which were further reduced to four domains: context, affect, cognition, and intention. Lor pointed out that the subjects in her study found the process of reflection writing difficult since they were

not certain what to write and wanted guidance. However, Lor insisted that teachers should aim at providing learners with challenging experiences that provoke deeper reflection, and with opportunities for a discussion with learners about the learning processes that arise from those opportunities.

A study on the implementation of self-Assessment was conducted by Thomson (1996) on a self-assessment project to develop self-directed learning among a diverse group of 100 learners – English, Chinese, Korean, and others – taking a Japanese course at the University of New South Wales. Self-directed learners in this study were defined as those who can set up a favourable climate of learning for themselves, diagnose their own needs realistically, translate learning needs into learning objectives, select and use tasks and effective strategies to achieve the objectives, and assess their own achievements for feedback on how to improve the next task's performance.

The self-assessment project had three main stages, i.e. a planning stage, a monitoring stage, and a review stage. In the planning stage, the learners assessed their Japanese language and communication skills; then drew up learning objectives and planned their learning objectives and assessment measure. The planning sheet was used in so doing and as a learning contract between the learner and teacher. In the monitoring stage, the learners assessed their progress and adjusted their plans. They also had a consultation with their teacher if they viewed this necessary. In the review stage, the learners reviewed their objectives, learning activities and progress and rated their performance on a scale of 0 to 10. At the end of the course, the project was evaluated by student assessment and feedback, and teachers' observations.

Out of 100, 98 learners completed the project and showed an overall positive attitude to the self-assessment project. Moreover, according to the survey results, the attitude towards and acceptance of the self-assessment project was not different by gender, native language, age, or previous attainment in the subject. The project made the course more learner-centred and provided the learners with opportunities to learn what they felt they needed to learn. However, the learners did not have confidence in all areas of self-assessment, i.e. needs assessment, continual assessment, and final assessment. They especially lacked confidence in doing their performance assessment without the teacher assistance. Many of them wished to have more support and guidance from their teacher. This may be due to their long experience with traditional school culture which did not promote student responsibility in assessment. Lack of

adequate skills in needs assessments and continuous assessment resulted in an inappropriate selection of objectives and activities. In regard to self-esteem, Asian female learners rated themselves low, which may be due to their upbringing. Boys are valued more than girls in Asian cultures.

It is suggested that it be necessary to provide in and out of classroom counselling for certain groups of learners in order to increase their ability to assume their own learning responsibility. Moreover, the findings imply that learners should be psychologically prepared to increase their self-confidence for their self-assessment performance.

In brief, in the independent mode of learning, the value of self-assessment cannot be denied. However, self-assessment is only useful if learners act on the results. By keeping the learning records regularly, learners are able to monitor their progress. Next section will explore in some details on keeping learning records.

2.4.4 Record Keeping of Learning Results

It is worth exploring more details on record keeping of learning results as suggested by Sheerin (1991). Feeling that they are making good progress in their learning tasks is very crucial for autonomous learners (Dickinson, 1987). Therefore, a record of learning results is used for psychological preparation (Gardner and Miller, 1999). Keeping records of their learning outcomes calls for learners' awareness of their learning whether progress is good or problematic in whatever aspects. According to Gardner and Miller (1999), keeping a record of learning outcomes is a vital element of a learner profile. Learner profiles which can consist of learner contract, record sheets of learning outcomes, study plans, needs and wants, and reflection of learning can provide opportunities for learners to reflect on their ability. It is noted that some devices are the same as those suggested by Dickinson (1987).

Besides the keeping of learning records to support independent learning, use of learner contract is another way to do so.

2.4.5 Learner Contract

In the mode of self-instruction as being autonomous learning, it is important that learners must set their own goals; therefore, a document is needed that is a 'learner contract'. A learner contract is a way that the teacher can use to support learner autonomy. According to Gardner and Miller (1999: 91), 'a contract is an

attempt to motivate learners and to make them take the process (of learning) seriously' besides a commitment of learners' time to be spent on their self-instruction. In the view of Dickinson (1987), it is necessary that learners feel that their learning is purposeful. To make it purposeful their learning needs to be structured, which can be achieved by using a learner contract. The learning structuring includes determining goals, deadlines for completing work, and the intensity of work. Also, it includes specifying the means of evaluating how well the goals have been achieved.

A contract provides learners with a framework for their planning, and a brief check-list of things they have to take into consideration. The contract will at least suggest what work they are going to do over what period. Besides focusing on setting the learning goals, the learner contract emphasises learners' commitment to learning time. Although the learner contract is not a legal valid document, it is effective to motivate learners and make them take the learning process seriously. However, the effect of the learner contract may vary according to different learning contexts. It is likely that diligent learners will treat learner contracts more seriously than others (Gardner and Miller, 1999).

Gardner and Miller argue that the learner contract is important in causing learners to think about and discuss their learning before they assume their independent learning. These are the aspects of the discussion: identify learners' needs and wants, consider their own abilities, set learning goals which truly reflect their needs and wants, consider the time they have available, and make a realistic study plan.

A contract system helps learners learn how to set both short and long term learning objectives, which can be used as a basis for self-evaluation (Dickinson, 1987; Sheerin, 1991). Learners therefore develop in terms of the greater awareness of their own learning problems and progress (Dickinson and Carver, 1980).

Based on the review of literature on learning independence and autonomy and its components, which is illustrated in Figure 2.2, as well as implementations of learner autonomy by psychologically and methodologically preparing learners, Figure 2.4 portrays all the discussion issues which serve as the framework for the learner training of this present study.

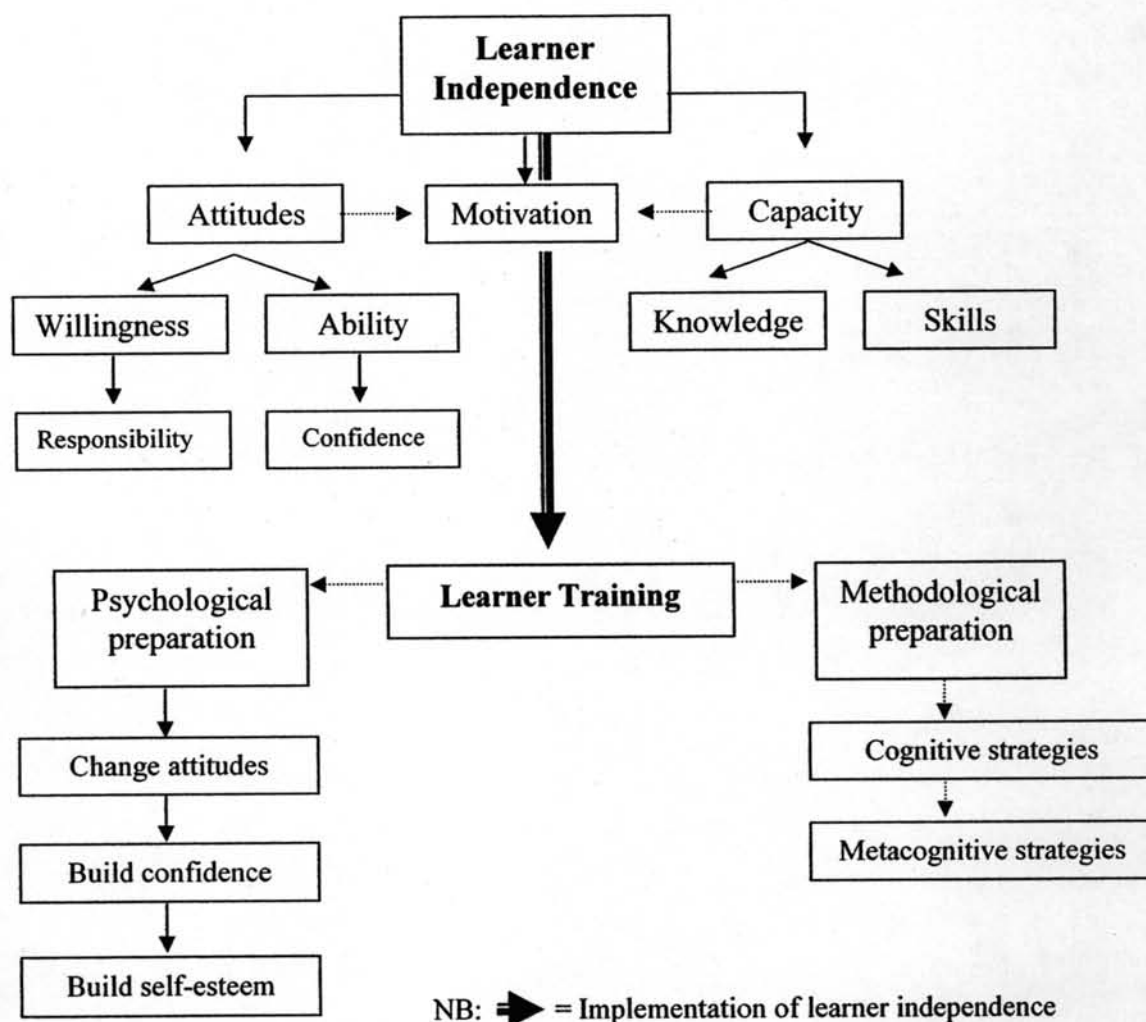


Figure 2.4: Learner Independence and Its Implementations

In conclusion, in the independent mode of learning, the fact that learners are willing to take responsibility for their own learning does not guarantee that they are proactive in their learning process. Therefore, the teachers have a duty to help them acquire learner autonomy. Teachers' roles are obviously important in this mode of learning, which provides the application for this present study in terms of the teacher or researcher's role that acted as the counsellor providing learning help and support to students performing independent learning on the web.

2.5 Web-Based Instruction (WBI) and Independent Learning

According to Benson (2001), one approach to the development of autonomy is technology-based approach, which focuses on independent interaction with educational technologies. Learners use technology to access resources. As Benson

and Voller (1997: 11) point out, '...language learners are more and more *forced* to rely on their own resources in an increasingly technological world'. The vital role of technology on autonomous learning is insisted by Graham et al. (2000: 2) that 'the world for which students are being prepared requires that they take responsibility for their learning; flexible working practices mean students need to learn in new way'.

Technology-based approach to language learning supports autonomy since it provides opportunities to learners to self-direct their own learning. Technology namely tape-recorder, fast copier, television, video recorder, computer, magazines, newspaper, fax and e-mail, has a great contribution to a wide spread of autonomy and self-success (Gremmo and Riley, 1995). According to Nunan and Lamb (2000), computerised programmes help enhance learner autonomy by giving a lot of power and responsibility to the learners. These tools are applied as facilities to establish the learning resource centres. Therefore, autonomy and technology are a good link to self-access language learning (Benson and Voller, 1997). However, for the case of self-access learning, learners may require a degree of autonomy in advance in order to use new technologies effectively (Beatty, 2003). Learner training well reflects this necessity.

Liu et al. (2003) argue that at present, the focus is not on whether to accept computer technology. Rather, research is now centred on how to integrate technology more effectively into the learning and teaching of language. Khan (1997) views that WBI is an innovative instructional approach for remote learners, by using the web. The term 'web-based instruction' is broadly defined by Relan and Gillani (1997: 41) as 'any form of instructional delivery in which the World Wide Web (WWW) is included as a tool'. Currently, the WWW is the most recent medium of computer-mediated communication used in the second or foreign language classroom. It will have a strong influence on education (Warschauer and Healey, 1998) and the future of education (Tetiawat and Igbaria, 2000). Webs are advantageous in incorporating multimedia and present information in the forms of hypertext, graphics, visuals and audio in addition to texts (Quinian, 1997; Chun and Pass, 2000). Therefore, WBI has a potential to respond to different learning styles of each learner (Riding and Rayner, 1998; Brown, 2000) who could be visual, kinaesthetic, verbal, or auditory (El-Tigi and Branch, 1997).

2.5.1 Web-based Instruction and Materials for Independent Learning

In training learners to be independent and autonomous, besides a contribution of learning strategies, materials should also be taken into account.

Lee (1996) stresses that in the self-access or independent learning context materials have a very important role to play in order to help learners develop autonomous learning. Lee also suggests four criteria for effective autonomous learning materials. Firstly, materials have to be very interesting and motivating. Because the teacher is not present in the autonomous mode of learning the learners will have a direct interaction with the materials. Secondly, materials for the early stage of learners' autonomy development need to be well-structured and systematic. Simple instructions, guidelines or answer keys should be provided since the learners of this stage are not accustomed to this mode of learning. Thirdly, materials should be of good quality and selected or designed by teachers. The learners who are beginners of the autonomous learning mode will feel confident that the materials are good. Lastly, materials should allow learners to develop their capacity for autonomous learning.

Lee concludes that the effective materials for autonomous learning have two qualities, i.e. affective and cognitive. Materials are *affective* because they increase learning motivation and encourage learners to learn, and make learning more enjoyable. Materials are *cognitive* since they provide comprehensible input, task instructions, systematic learning directions, linguistic information and independent learning mechanisms. Lee's suggestions on effective materials for learner autonomy correspond to Little's (1997) perspective that learner autonomy is partly affective – something about positive motivation, and partly cognitive – something about an improvement of access to content and learning process.

In the view of Gardner and Miller (1999) authentic materials are any texts whether printed or digital, or tape specially produced for a purpose which is not only the teaching of target language. Sinclair (1996) adds that authentic materials both written and recorded are *non-directive materials* – that do not explicitly focus learners on one or some particular aspects of the learning process. Learners are free to focus on any aspects of the target language that they want to.

One advantage of authentic materials is that when using them learners can concentrate only on relevant aspects of the language such as grammar, vocabulary, functions, etc. Learners do not waste time on learning what is not relevant.

Consequently, they can develop their own learning strategies (Riley, 1981a cited in Dickinson, 1987). However, the teacher should not develop specialised knowledge for learners from using authentic materials, rather the teacher tries to assist them to develop techniques that can be applied to any types of documents (Dickinson, *ibid.*).

Likewise, Little (1996) argues that authentic texts are very important in fostering learner autonomy in two ways, i.e. on the affective level and psychological level. On the affective level, the beginners of autonomous learning mode quickly build up their confidence when encountering the target language. They also tend not to worry about their incomplete understanding since only partial comprehension is adequate. On the psychological level, authentic texts reflect a relation between language learning and language use. This is very much concerned with using the language for communication. Therefore, Little writes:

Authentic texts provide learners at all levels with the means to explore linguistic form communicatively, and the communicative stimulus to produce new meanings that are situated in a genuine communicative context (p. 231).

The importance of authentic materials in helping the development of learner autonomy is reinforced by the survey conducted by Lee (1996) with the 50 first year Hong Kong students as the subjects. The findings reveal that generally and affectively most students regardless of their age and proficiency level preferred authentic materials to textbook materials since authentic materials were interesting and enjoyable to use. However, the higher proficiency learners tended to prefer the authentic materials to lower proficiency learners who did not view the authentic materials as effective to help their learning as the textbooks. The lower proficiency learners are sometimes confused when using the authentic materials. Therefore, Lee suggests that it be better to assist the learners to use the authentic materials effectively, not to avoid them. Very clearly, this reflects that Lee has a very strong attitude towards the effectiveness of authentic materials in fostering learner autonomy.

There are, however, some disadvantages in using authentic materials. Language may be too complex and therefore it is too difficult for low proficiency learners or beginners to understand or acquire the language. This well supports the findings revealed above. It is therefore recommended that authentic materials be adapted before use (Gardner and Miller, 1999).

In regard to WBI, Felix (2002) states with confidence that the web provides a powerful tool for language learning environment since learners can practise the language and the language structures can be reinforced. Furthermore, the web can facilitate the use of real-life learning tasks in authentic settings. Felix also asserts that the online learning is a very useful tool that provides expanded learning experience beyond the classroom and that can be used to fruitfully supplement classroom instruction.

In conclusion, WBI is the most innovative technology for independent learning due to its authentic materials and self-contained feature, which is appropriate to be used to promote independent learning. Therefore, this study employed WBI as a tool to enhance learner independence.

2.6 Levels of Proficiency and Independent Learning

Learners are different in many aspects, and one of them is language proficiency. Proficiency consists of the learner's knowledge of the target language (Ellis, 1995). According to Omaggio Hadley (2000: 2-3), language proficiency can be defined in a more general context by considering 'some common synonyms which include words like *expertise*, *ability*, or *competence*, implying a high level of *skill*, well developed *knowledge* or a polished *performance*'. Therefore, characteristics of learners with different levels of proficiency are different.

Jerdan (1993) examined characteristics distinguishing high and low proficiency high school students and found that the high proficiency students consistently performed well on the tests, showed higher task orientation, higher attention level, and more self-directed effort. They also exhibited a higher level of cognitive processing skills on a story-telling task. In contrast, the low proficiency ones showed lower task orientation and their attention qualities were less than those of the former group. They were likely to be inattentive, impulsive, hyperactive and disordered. They were also different from the high proficiency students in terms of learning, i.e. less self-directed effort, lower ability, less engagement in social factors, and lower cognitive processing skills. The researcher pointed out that any one of these characteristics could be utilised to predict learning achievement. In an academic environment, difficulties in attention, task orientation, learning and cognitive processing can cause low grades.

Efficacy expectancy is an interesting characteristic of learners as well since it has a correlation with learning achievement. Asawakul (1984) conducted the research to study the efficacy expectancy for an assigned task of high and low proficiency students in Mathayom Suksa 3 and found that high proficiency students had a higher efficacy expectancy than low proficiency ones. Based on the finding, the researcher suggested that teachers should encourage students, especially the low proficiency ones, to think of themselves and their ability in a positive way, which can help to increase their confidence in their learning ability; and as a result they should put more effort on their learning.

In the area of language learning strategies, high proficiency students are referred to as 'good language learners'. Naiman et al. (1978 cited in Rubin, 1987: 20) list five characteristics of good language learners, that is,

- (1) actively involve themselves in the language learning process by identifying and seeking preferred learning environments and exploring them,
- (2) develop an awareness of language as a system,
- (3) develop an awareness of language as a means of communication and interaction,
- (4) accept and cope with the affective demands of L2,
- (5) extend and revise L2 system by inferencing and monitoring.

According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990), good language learners having a wide range of learning strategies and use various types of learning strategies rather than only one strategy when they have to perform a task. Rubin (1987) agrees that good or successful language learners use particular sets of cognitive and metacognitive behaviours in their learning differently from the less successful learners in terms of degree of use.

In conclusion, language proficiency relates to both competence and performance of the learners, and it appears that in every learning level, the high proficiency learners tend to be more successful in language learning due to some characteristics that are different from the low proficiency learners such as learning strategies and more positive attitudes towards independent learning. However, it should be noted that so far research has been carried out merely to implement the same degree of learner independence with learners of different general English proficiency levels. This reflects that degree of independence may not be in line with

learners' expectation and needs; therefore, high proficiency learners with their higher learning capacity appear to be more successful and have more positive attitude towards learner independence than low proficiency learners.

Since learner independence being inclusive of help and support of the teacher should be congruent and balanced with learners' expectation and needs (Brockett and Hiemstra, 1993), it is worthwhile exploring the effects of general English proficiency levels on their English reading comprehension ability of learners, who are trained to be independent learners but received different levels of support from the teacher/researcher. This leads to the establishment of the second hypothesis of this study. Moreover, it is interesting to combine both degrees of support for learner independence and proficiency levels of learners to explore their interaction effect on English reading comprehension ability, which can provide additional valued information, and is the justification for the third hypothesis.

2.7 English Reading and Independent Learning

Reading, the dependent variable of this present study, is one of the main language skills that can determine levels of language proficiency. However, as pointed out in Chapter One, reading is the problematic skill for EFL and Thai learners. However, research shows that independent learning can help improve the reading ability of Thai students (Petpradab, 1986; Thammongkol, 1979). In order to diagnose the problem, it is necessary to understand the nature of reading; therefore, what reading is and models of the reading process will be explored.

2.7.1 Definitions of Reading

There is a relationship between reading and language because reading is concerned with language texts. Two reasons can explain this relationship (Urquhart and Weir, 1998). The first is due to the definition of reading as a decoding process, i.e. 'translating written symbols into corresponding sounds (Ur, 2002:138). However, the decoding definition raises an argument that the decoding of the print does not mean reading since it does not guarantee comprehension. The second reason involves the definition of reading as the cognitive activities performed by the reader who is in contact with a text.

Reading as the decoding process had received attention but later in the 1960s it was replaced by an emphasis on comprehension, which involves all the cognitive processes namely reading strategies, inferencing, memory, background knowledge of the text, and decoding. Therefore, Urquhart and Weir (1998: 22) define that 'reading is the process of receiving and interpreting information encoded in language form via the medium of print'. According to Goodman (1989: 12), reading is 'a receptive language process. It is a psycholinguistic process in that it starts with a linguistic surface representation encoded by a writer and ends with meaning which the reader constructs'. Clearly, reading reflects interaction between language and thought, which is supported by the definition given by Anderson (1999: 1), i.e. 'reading is an active, fluent process which involves the reader and the reading material in building meaning'. Meaning occurs from a combination of words on the text and readers' background knowledge and experiences, rather than from the print or merely from the knowledge of the readers.

Based on these definitions of reading, it is obvious that reading involves both the decoding and cognitive processes of language.

2.7.2 Models of the Reading Process

2.7.2.1 Bottom-up Model

Bottom-up model of reading process begins with the stimulus: the text or bits of the text. Readers process the text word for word. It is the 'text or data-driven process'; readers process the text word for word and accept the author as the authority (Urquhart and Weir, 1998). Anderson (1999: 2) simply states that bottom-up models 'depend primarily on the information presented by the text. That information is processed from letter features to letters to words to meaning'. In this model, readers deal with letters, words, then sentences in the order, which provides the term 'bottom-up'. The bottom-up model is therefore sequential – one stage is completed before another is begun (Urquhart and Weir, 1998).

Eskey (1986) uses the term 'identification' to signify this model of reading. Identification of the basic forms and meanings of the language of the text is the rapid and accurate determination of what the text says. Good readers recognise words and phrases mostly automatically and they make sense of the text by a simple

decoding of the text into individual linguistic units like phonemes, graphemes, words (Carrell, 1989). Good decoding skills are important for good reading.

However, in order to make any sense of information of the text, readers must relate it to what they already know about the text and to his cognitive structure (Eskey, 1986). This leads to the second model of reading.

2.7.2.2 Top-down Model

Top-down model refers to approaches that argue readers' expectation in the processing of the text is very important. 'The reader is seen as bringing hypotheses to bear on the text, and using the text data to confirm or deny the hypotheses' (Urquhart and Weir, 1998: 42). Readers have their hypotheses and predictions about the text and they try to prove their hypotheses from the reading of the text (Samuels and Kamil, 1989). This view of reading has been called a 'psycholinguistic guessing game' (Goodman, 1967: 108 cited in Eskey, 1986: 12) as per the following description:

Reading is a selective process. It involves partial use of available minimal language cues selected from perceptual input on the basis of the reader's expectation. As this partial information is processed, tentative decisions are made, to be confirmed, rejected or refined as reading progresses. More simply stated, reading is a psycholinguistic guessing game. It involves an interaction between thought and language. Efficient reading does not result from precise perception and identification of all elements, but from skill in selecting the fewest, most productive cues necessary to produce guesses which are right the first time.

According to Eskey (1986), the top-down model involves higher-level cognitive skills that allow for meaningful reconstruction of a text as a unified, coherent structure of meaning. He employs the term 'interpretive' skills to refer to it. The top-down model tends to reduce the importance of the text, but increase reliance on prior linguistic and conceptual knowledge of readers for meaning reconstruction of the text.

In this model, the readers use their background knowledge to understand the text they read. However, Samuels and Kamil (1989) point out that one problem related to the top-down model is the reader's inadequate knowledge of the topic, which causes difficulty in predictions. Therefore, this model may be more suitable for less proficient readers who have slow rates of word recognition or

bottom-up reading ability. The top-down model does not indicate proficient reading behaviour. For proficient readers, it is easier to recognise words in the text, rather than try to make predictions of the text.

Eskey (1989) also maintains that there are some limitations in the top-down model. Due to the emphasis on the higher-level skills by means of using context clues or background knowledge, the low-level skills which emphasise fast and accurate identification of lexical and grammatical forms are not the main focus of this model. Therefore, in contrast to the view of Samuels and Kamil this model is effective for skilful and fluent readers whose perception and decoding has been automatic.

2.7.2.3 Interactive Model

Interactive models of reading process combine features of both bottom-up and top-down models since neither the bottom-up nor the top-down approach is thought to be adequate elements of the reading process. Reading is an interactive process involving the use of background knowledge, expectations, context and so on as well as integrating several skills, strategies, and processes (Eskey and Grabe, 1989; Anderson, 1999). Anderson asserts that 'an interactive model is the best description of what happens when we read' (p.3). The interactive model is the inspiration for the methodological preparation in terms of reading strategy training of this study.

2.7.3 Reading Strategies

Although reading is a complex cognitive skill, anyone can learn to read or read more effectively because humans are pre-programmed to read (Eskey, 1986). Therefore, teachers can teach students to learn how to read or strengthen their reading skills. As Dreyer and Nel (2003) point out, instruction that provides students with a variety of strategies can be effective to promote comprehension monitoring and foster comprehension. Students need strategy training to become strategic strategy users. Reading strategies therefore play a vital role in reading comprehension. In the field of learning strategies, of which reading strategy is a subcategory, it is widely accepted that learning strategies help students learn better and become better or more successful learners.

In regard to learning strategy and reading skills, Scarcella and Oxford (1992) comment that it is not guaranteed that students will improve their reading skills just by doing a wide reading of large quantities of reading materials. They state clearly that students especially the beginning ESL students need to be taught strategies in order to improve their reading skills.

'To improve their reading abilities, students must develop their comprehension skills. Most beginning ESL learners have difficulty understanding their texts because they pay attention to the literal meaning of the words rather than try to understand the overall meaning. A variety of teaching strategies can be used to improve the ESL learners' reading comprehension' (p. 107).

Scarcella and Oxford view that teaching strategies are necessary for ESL students; therefore, for the EFL students strategy instruction will be essential for helping students' reading comprehension.

2.7.4 Characteristics of Poor and Successful Readers

Since reading is a complex process and there are several sources for reading problems as discussed above, it is worthwhile exploring characteristics of poor and successful readers because this knowledge will give a lot of contributions to teachers who want to improve their students' reading skills.

Knuth and Jones (1991) nicely summarise characteristics of poor and successful readers as follows (Table 2.4):

Table 2.4: Characteristics of Poor and Successful Readers (Knuth and Jones, 1991)

Characteristics of Poor Readers	Characteristics of Successful Readers
Think understanding occurs from 'getting the words right,' rereading	Understanding that they must take responsibility for construction meaning using their prior knowledge.
Are poor strategy users: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They do not think strategically about how to read something or solve a problem. • They do not have an accurate sense of when they have good comprehension readiness for assessment. 	Are good strategy users: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They think strategically, plan, monitor their comprehension, and revise their strategies. • They have strategies for what to do when they do not know what to do.
Have relatively low self-esteem.	Have self-confidence that they are effective learners; see themselves as agents able to actualise their potential.
See success and failure as the result of luck or teacher bias.	See success as the result of hard work and efficient thinking.

It can be concluded that potential or successful readers are those who are able to use reading strategies effectively particularly metacognitive strategies. Moreover, they are likely to be independent learners who are confident and know how to learn by relying on themselves, and who are reflective learners. Therefore, teaching reading strategies, in particular those applied by good readers, is essential to improve poor readers. However, not only do teachers need to provide a tool, but also they need to build self-esteem and confidence in poor readers so that they perceive that they are able to improve their reading ability and become successful readers. In order words, both psychological and methodological preparations are needed to serve these purposes to help learners become independent learners who know how to read effectively.

2.8 Related Research Studies

There are a lot of research studies in the field of learner autonomy, which explores different aspects of autonomy. Some interesting research studies are reviewed as follows:

The research with the objective on supporting greater autonomy in language learning was conducted by Lee (1998) with the 15 first year students of Language and Communication course at Hong Kong Polytechnic University. The incorporation of the classroom-based self-directed learning programme in the course considered the following factors for developing autonomy.

Voluntariness: Students who volunteered to join the programme may benefit more than those who did not.

Learner choice: Students essentially made decision about their learning, worked at their own pace and time.

Flexibility: Students could change options such as objectives, contents, process of learning according to their needs and wants.

Teacher support: Teacher facilitated the process of learning and personal discovery by establishing a good rapport with students, supporting and guiding them in their learning, and providing feedback, encouragement and reinforcement.

Peer support: Learner autonomy was not only individual but also social. Interaction, negotiation, and collaboration were crucial for autonomy promotion.

To implement the programme, the teacher signed the learner contract with each student, and told them to keep their own learning record, i.e. to monitor their

own progress. Students could change the learner contract all the time when necessary according to their learning reflection and evaluation. At the end of the first semester, students evaluated their progress and re-designed the contract for the next semester. Students could obtain help or advice from the teacher at any time.

To evaluate the programme, the researcher took into account students' involvement, their self-evaluation at the end of the course, their views of the programme, the teacher's observations, and the limitations of the programme. Regarding students' involvement, time they spent on learning and learning activities were examined, and it enabled a division of students into two groups – the more enthusiastic and the less enthusiastic learners. The former group spent more time on their learning than the latter group. Students' self-evaluations showed that the enthusiastic learners seemed to be more positive about themselves and learning in general. The less enthusiastic learners showed a lower self-esteem. Moreover, the more enthusiastic learners had a positive view about the self-directed learning programme, viewing that it helped them improve their English. By contrast, the less enthusiastic learners did not think they had improved although they thought the programme was worthwhile.

Based on the teacher's observations, it appeared that the two groups showed some differences in their motivation. Some lacked determination and self-discipline to carry the self-directed learning, which could be explained by the view that autonomy is a personal attribute and self-management. Learners were also different in terms of their expectations about the teacher's role. The more enthusiastic learners sought some kind of help from the teacher by maintaining regular contact through journal writing and getting feedback on their written work. By contrast, the less enthusiastic learners seemed not to have any expectations of what the teacher could do to help them improve their English. Limitations of the programme were inadequate resources and facilities to support students' learning, insufficient opportunities for collaborative learning, and not enough support from the teacher due to the number of students.

There are some implications arising from this study, which should be useful for the effective implementation of the independent learning programme. First, learner training is essential since not all learners are ready for autonomous learning. Also, learner training would benefit the lazy students by increasing their self-confidence and self-esteem. Second, teacher counselling should be systematically

incorporated into the programme. Third, it is necessary to provide choice or learning materials as many as possible. Last, collaborative learning should be increasingly enhanced so that learners can share ideas such as on successful learning strategies.

It was concluded that the independent or self-directed learning programme in itself did not enable all learners to be self-directed. However, it was essential to provide learning contexts that helped learners develop the necessary capacity and willingness to take charge of their own learning, through which learner autonomy can be fostered.

A study on autonomous learning readiness and attitudes was conducted by Lin (1996) to investigate to what extent the three semester learner training programme helped the students who were teacher trainees develop their learning independence. Results from the questionnaires revealed that students gained confidence and independence. They expressed that learners needed to be trained to be independent learners. Moreover, almost all of them viewed that strategy training was very useful. This reinforces the importance of learner training in helping learners become autonomous learners.

In terms of research on attitudes towards autonomous learning mode in Thailand, Leetim (2001) found that Mathayom Suksa 3 students who were taught English reading by autonomous approach have a better attitude towards their learning than the ones who were taught by the traditional mode. Similarly, the first year undergraduate students of Khon Kaen University viewed that learning English reading through self-directed learning by using SRA (Reading Laboratory Development and RFU (Reading for Understanding Kit 2) was useful for developing reading skills (Karnphanit, 1999). The value of autonomous learning was also appreciated by social studies teachers and adult students (Yahakorn, 1990).

The research on learner beliefs which importantly reflect learners' readiness for autonomy was conducted by Cotterall (1995a) based on the justification that the beliefs and attitudes held by learners have strong influence on their learning behaviour. False beliefs about language learning may lead to the use of less effective strategies (Horwitz, 1987 cited in Cotterall, 1995a).

Cotterall collected data on learner beliefs about language learning by administering the five-point Likert scale questionnaire to 139 ESL adult learners enrolling in the intensive English for Academic course at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. The aim of the study was to see whether responses revealed any particular clusters of beliefs. Factor analysis was used to identify the covariation among responses to the items in the questionnaire, and six factors in learners' sets of beliefs were obtained, which can be summarized as follows:

Factor 1: Role of the teacher

The factor consisted of five questions emphasizing the traditional teacher authority. Learners who believed that the teacher should do all the things such as offering help, telling their difficulties and what to learn were not ready for autonomy. Therefore, the teacher aiming at preparing language learners to work more independently needs to raise learners' awareness about language learning processes and gradually transfer learning responsibility to learners. Autonomy enhancement can be done with the role of teacher as counsellor and facilitator.

Factor 2: Role of feedback

This factor consisted of three items on beliefs about the role of feedback. Feedback can be obtained from both external and internal sources, i.e. from the teacher and learners themselves respectively, for instance. Autonomous learners are not likely to depend only on the teacher for feedback. Instead, they perform self-monitoring of their learning process, which provides feedback on their language performance. Clearly, they employ the internal source of feedback. Self-monitoring is regarded as an important learning strategy, which characterises autonomous and successful learners (O'Malley et al., 1990; Wang and Peverly, 1986 cited in Cotterall, 1995a).

Not only do autonomous learners monitor their learning, but also assess their efforts. It is necessary that learners should be able to evaluate the quality of their learning. Learners can learn efficiently if they appreciate their learning abilities and progress (Blanche, 1988 cited in Cotterall, 1995a).

Factor 3: Learner independence

This factor consisted of three items that were central to the beliefs supporting autonomy. Learners who agreed that they had clear English learning goals and liked to try new learning activities were characterised as good language learners, who appreciated independence from the teacher. They were willing to set their own

learning goals and take risks. In brief, the degree of independence with which learners feel comfortable will be a crucial indicator of their readiness for autonomy.

Factor 4: Learner confidence in study ability

This factor with two items reflected confidence in study ability of learners in language and other subjects learning, which showed readiness for autonomy of the respondents. It illustrated the importance of learner confidence, which is linked to self-esteem. Learner confidence also goes hand in hand with learning success and it defines a characteristic of autonomous learners. Learner confidence is in parallel with a belief in study ability, which influences the learning outcome. However, learner confidence derives from their perception of previous learning experience which can enhance or hinder confidence, depending on their learning assessment validity and understanding of the language learning process. As a result, in early stages the teacher should help learners develop confidence in learning.

Factor 5: Experience of language learning

This factor consisted of two statements on past language learning success and a development of self-assessment methods based on learners' prior experience. Learners who agreed with these statements were those whose previous language learning experience has resulted in a degree of awareness about themselves as language learners, about language learning and about learning strategies. Autonomous learners employ their experience to perform tasks, use strategies and solve problems to gain more understanding of effective language learning.

Factor 6: Approach to studying

'Approach to study' is defined as the behaviour which learners engage in as they study. Individual learners generally vary in their approach to studying due to an involvement of many variables namely cognitive and affective variables. It is hard to identify the relationship between approach to studying and autonomy. Therefore, the point in this factor on 'whether learners study English in the same way as other subjects' could not suggest a characteristic of autonomous learners.

In conclusion, learner beliefs about language learning are central to their readiness for autonomy. Learners and teacher should investigate these beliefs and construct a shared understanding of the language learning process and of their roles in it. Therefore, learner preparation for autonomy readiness is essential, and this well reflects the important need for psychological and methodological preparation of learners.

Based on the existing research findings, learners who were trained or taught by the autonomous learning mode are likely to have a positive attitude towards learner autonomy and its value. As a result, this leads to the establishment of the fourth and fifth hypotheses – learners' attitudes towards learner independence will be highly increased at the end of the course.

Regarding research on (WBI) and learner independence outside the field of language education, Manodee (2001) investigated the effects of web-based instruction on nursing theory for personal health care on self-directed learning readiness and learning achievement of nursing students. The findings illustrate that the readiness to be autonomous learners of the experimental group was significantly higher after the experiment. They were more ready for autonomous mode of learning than the control group. Importantly, the achievement test scores in the experimental group were significantly higher than those in the control group.

There is a lot of research on language learning strategies. First, in Thailand, Wimolkasem (2001) investigated the effects of activating metacognitive awareness on reading comprehension proficiency of the first year undergraduate students. The results indicated that while both groups improved their reading test scores and strategy use in the course of the study, the experimental group showed a significantly higher gain in reading ability and reported more frequent strategy use than the control group. The findings also revealed a significant correlation between strategy use and reading proficiency. The findings confirm that language proficiency has some effect on the efficiency of the reading process, revealed by some reading strategies such as grammatical transfer, translation and use of linguistic knowledge. However, the findings also indicate that cognitive processes are more important than L2 proficiency. The most popular strategies that the Thai subjects used are background knowledge, rereading and context clues, which show the reliance on the cognitive processes in reading.

Ratchadawisitkul (1986) conducted a survey to compare English learning strategies between 230 Mathayom Suksa 6 high and 230 low proficiency students. The findings reveal that the high proficiency students used the following strategies more than the low proficiency ones: using context to guess or interpret the meaning of words or sentences, using communication strategies, monitoring the learning and

language use by planning the learning and checking the learning outcome. Moreover, the high proficiency students practised English both in and outside the classroom more frequently than the low proficiency students.

Nevertheless, the study was carried out by Halbach (2000) on students' learning strategies by looking at their diaries as a learner or strategy training tool to help students develop self-assessment, self-monitoring, planning, resources, etc. The findings suggest that the better students seem to benefit most from the learner or strategy training. Therefore, the strategy training may not be appropriate for the weaker students. However, it seems that students in Halbach's study did not receive any preparations for the independent learning. In addition, Rees-Miller (1993) made a critique of strategy training and concluded that such training was not effective since there are several factors complicating the implementation of learner training such as cultural differences, age, students' educational background, and varying cognitive styles.

2.9 The Present Study

It is noted that there is much research on independent or autonomous learning. However, in terms of experimental research it seems there is no research carried out to investigate the effect of different degrees of independent learning on learning achievement, particularly in terms of teacher's support. Therefore, it is the attempt of this present study to classify degree of independent learning based on support of teacher. Next section provides details on the classification of support for learner independence for this present study.

2.9.1 Classification of Support for Learner Independence for this Study

This part will discuss the theoretical framework for the classification of support for learner independence, which will shed light on the criteria or dimensions used to differentiate the three groups.

The theoretical framework used to classify degrees of support for learner independence into most support (MS), semi-support (SS) and least support (LS) of this present study are based mainly on the autonomous learning theory.

Based on the review of literature on autonomy, there is no agreed definition for the term 'autonomy'. Autonomy manifests itself in various ways and degrees. However, it can be concluded that learner autonomy can be defined as follows.

Firstly, autonomy refers to a capacity which consists of attitudes and ability to take charge of one's own learning by determining learning objectives and contents, selecting and using appropriate methods and techniques, monitoring and evaluating learning. Secondly, autonomy is not the innate ability of learners, but it can be obtained through formal teaching in a systematic manner and can be achieved gradually. Therefore, autonomy is not self-instruction meaning learning without a teacher. The teacher still holds responsibility in the formal situation. In other words, autonomous learning does not mean learning in isolation. Thirdly, autonomy also includes positive attitudes of learners towards autonomous learning. Positive attitudes reflect learners' willingness to assume responsibility for their own learning, and self-confidence to learn independently and self-direct or manage their learning. Autonomy also links to motivation, which helps increase willingness to learn and will result in learning effectiveness. Fourthly, autonomy is not a fixed degree of every learner. Each learner possesses different degrees of autonomy, which depends on various factors. Lastly, optimal conditions for autonomous learning result when there is a balance or congruence between the learner's level of autonomous learning and the extent to which opportunity for autonomous learning is possible in a given situation. Therefore, degrees of guidance and directions from a facilitator or counsellor have to be at a right level in accordance with learners' needs and expectation.

In terms of the literature on degrees of autonomy, like the definition of learner autonomy there is no agreed criterion for a particular level of autonomy. Scholars in the field manifest degrees of autonomy in different dimensions. Some have their own criteria for judging degrees of autonomy, which can be summarised in Table 2.5 as follows.

Table 2.5: Criteria for Determining Degrees of Autonomy

Scholars	Criteria for degrees of autonomy
Little (1990)	Freedom to learn, which is not at the same level in different learning contexts due to various factors e.g. within or outside the full time educational system.
Littlewood (1999)	Freedom to learn always constrained by dependence of learners on help and guidance of others.
Holec (1981); Little (1997); and Brockett and Hiemstra (1993).	Autonomy resulted from different degrees of self-direction in learning. Full self-directed or autonomous learning depending on help learners can obtain during the time they take responsibility for their independent learning, which is constrained by support and co-operation with others (interactions).

Dickinson (1987)	Total autonomy if no teacher involvement at all in self-instruction. Semi-autonomy if conventional teaching and self-instruction are involved.
Littlewood (1999)	Levels of learners taking partial or total ownership of many learning processes that have been in the hand of the teacher.

Based on the literature, there are three main criteria used to classify the degrees of support for learner independence for this present study namely freedom to learn, teacher intervention, and help and guidance. Each criterion is supported by theoretical concepts for determining particular characteristics of each group.

Under the criterion *Freedom to learn* which is the roles of autonomous learners, Holec's (1981) definition of autonomous learners is applied with attention paid on the selection of learning strategies, i.e. determining objectives, defining contents, selecting methods and techniques to be used, monitoring learning procedure, and evaluating learning. These are considered as the basic characteristics of independence learners that should be promoted and enhanced. Learners in every group therefore were fostered towards these important characteristics of independent learners. However, since freedom to learn is always constrained by help and guidance of others or dependence of learners on others (Holec, 1981; Littlewood, 1990), their degrees of freedom to learn are different among the three groups.

Each learner in the MS (most support) group determines objectives of English reading skill, chooses contents from available web-based materials on the EDO to learn at their own pace and time outside a regular classroom by selecting and making use of appropriate learning strategies, monitors their use of these learning strategies and evaluates their own learning with a consideration of written feedback from the teacher, which was given every week during their independent learning through the web. A combination of the teacher's written feedback with their self-monitoring and evaluation, which is considered as help and guidance of others, causes their freedom to learn to be less than other two groups. The SS (semi-support) group has the same freedom to learn as the former group except less frequency of written feedback to be used for their learning monitoring and evaluation. The LS (least support) group relying only on their self-monitoring and evaluation does not receive teacher's written feedback; they have the most freedom to learn.

In addition, the three groups are different in terms of the criteria *Teacher intervention* (Dickinson, 1987), and *Help and support* (Holec, 1981; Dickinson, 1987; Voller, 1997; Gremmo and Riley, 1995; Gardner and Miller, 1999).

Regarding *teacher intervention*, the supportive concept of autonomy that is autonomy in different learning context is not at the same level due to various factors. In the context of the present study, the independent learning mode is considered as the self-access language learning assignment according to the policy of Language Institute, Dhurakit Pundit University. The supportive view to incorporate independent learning into the programme structure is that autonomy may fail if it is just something unusual and added in the programme (Cotterall, 1995b). It needs to be institutionalised (Hammond and Collins, 1991 cited in Cotterall, 1995b). Based on that policy factor, the students are required to do the self-access language learning work every week, on which the frequency of the teacher intervention is based. Teacher intervention is operationally defined in terms of a requirement of the teacher that students have to do the assignments on a weekly basis for her checking and feedback giving. For the MS group, learners are required to work and submit their work every week from weeks 5-14 (10 times in total) for feedback.

Based on 50 per cent of the 10 weeks determined for the MS group, the degree of teacher intervention in terms of work submission for SS will be 5 times. The SS group is required to work on a weekly basis but submit their work every two weeks, i.e. weeks 6, 8, 10, 12, and 14 (5 times in total). The LS group will be required to work on a weekly basis; however, they are not required to submit their work until week 14 or at the end of the course. Theoretically, their independent learning is not intervened by the teacher for feedback giving until the end of the course.

In terms of *help and support* provided by the teacher, which is considered as a role of teacher, there are two types of help and support, i.e. written feedback and face-to-face counselling. Degrees of written feedback for the MS and SS groups are in relation to the degrees of teacher intervention of these two groups. The former receives written feedback for 10 times, while the latter 5 times. The LS group does not receive any written feedback, which is in relation to the submission of their work at one time at the end of the course. The justification for the LS group is based on the characteristic of good language learners that the high autonomous learners tend to use their own self-monitoring to improve their learning. In other words, they are likely to rely on the *internal* source of feedback, rather than *external* source. *External* feedback

can be the one provided by a teacher, either directly or via a computer, and from peers (Lou et al., 2003: 251). According to Cotterall (1995a), autonomous learners, however, are unlikely to depend solely on the teacher for feedback. Self-monitoring provides them with feedback on their language performance.

In this present study, 'feedback' of the teacher is not the answers to the reading exercises since these can be obtained automatically from the web or EDO. Instead, adapted from the attributes of feedback suggested by Cotterall (1995a), 'feedback' of this study refers to written messages conveyed by the teacher to learners regarding their language learning monitoring, assessment of their learning efforts, and appreciation of their ability and responsibility for their independent learning. Furthermore, feedback is considered as a dialogue between the teacher and learner -- the teacher will respond to points or problems mentioned in the reflection part. Feedback is used as a means to encourage learners to monitor their own learning and progress as well as exploit the feedback from the teacher for their learning improvement. Both cognitive and affective domains are considered for provision of feedback.

Face-to-face counselling is provided for the MS group every two weeks, i.e. once during weeks 5-6, weeks 7-8, weeks 9-10, weeks 11-12, and weeks 13-14 (5 times in total). It should be noted that the week of mid-term examination is not taken into consideration. Each counselling session takes approximately 15-20 minutes. The required face-to-face counselling cannot be given on a weekly basis due to time constraints against a number of students. The SS group receives required face-to-face counselling for three times, i.e. in July, August, and September, which is considered as an appropriate proportion towards the first group (50%). There is no required face-to-face counselling for the LS group; however, they can ask for it if they wish. Similarly, the justification is based on the characteristic of good language learners that the high independent learners can use their own self-monitoring to improve their learning (Cotterall, 1995a). Cotterall points out that it would be wrong to assume that all the autonomous learners feel comfortable discussing their learning with the teacher. Therefore, they themselves should decide whether and when they need help. Table 2.6 shows the classification of the degrees of support for learner independence for each group.

In conclusion, learner independence, the term used for this present study, signifies that learners need to take charge of their own learning; however, they can

obtain support and guidance from the teacher. Meanwhile, learners do not possess the same degree of independence; therefore, this study attempts to classify the different degrees of support for learner independence based on the related literature. Since learners are different in terms of degrees of learner independence, which theoretically should be congruent with their expectation and needs, and since it seems that there is no research conducted to enhance learner independence through different degrees of independence, it is the aim of this study to investigate the effects of different degrees of support for learner independence fostered through WBI on the language learning effectiveness, i.e. English reading comprehension ability. Therefore, the first hypothesis was set accordingly.

Table 2.6: Classification of Degrees of Support for Learner Independence

No.	Dimensions/Criteria	Underpinning Theoretical Concepts	Most Support (MS)	Semi-Support (SS)	Least Support (LS)
1	<p>Roles of learners: Freedom to learn (Little, 1990)</p>	<p>Taking charge of their own learning (Holec, 1981)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Determine objectives - Define contents - Select methods and techniques to be used - Monitor learning procedure - Evaluate learning (strategy selection, Wenden: 1991) <p>Always constrained by help and support of others</p>	<p>Each learner determines objectives of English reading study, chooses contents from available web-based materials on EDO programme to learn at their own pace and time outside a regular classroom, monitors and evaluates their own learning with written feedback from the teacher every week during their independent learning through the EDO.</p>	<p>Each learner determines objectives of English reading study, chooses contents from available web-based materials on EDO programme to learn at their own pace and time outside a regular classroom, monitors and evaluates their own learning without written feedback from the teacher.</p>	<p>Each learner determines objectives of English reading study, chooses contents from available web-based materials on EDO programme to learn at their own pace and time outside a regular classroom, monitors and evaluates their own learning without written feedback from the teacher.</p>
	<p>Teacher Intervention (Dickinson, 1987): Based on DPU's learning context and policy on self-access language learning, learners perform and submit a piece of work every week. It is the teacher's encouragement for work submission for feedback.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of independence and responsibility (Dickinson, 1987) - No teacher intervention at all is total autonomy (Dickinson, 1987) - Limited teacher intervention generally outside the classroom (Tudor, 1996) 	<p>Learners are required to submit their work (Learner Contract, Learning Record Sheet) every week, i.e. weeks 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14 (10 times in total).</p>	<p>Learners are required to submit their work (Learner Contract, Learning Record Sheet) every two weeks, i.e. weeks 6, 8, 10, 12 and 14 (5 times in total).</p>	<p>Learners are not required to submit their work (Learner Contract, Learning Record Sheet) until the end of the course, i.e. week 14 (only 1 time).</p>

3	<p>Roles of Teacher: Providing help and support (Holec, 1981); Being a helper or facilitator (Dickinson, 1987), a counsellor (Voller, 1997; Gremmo and Riley, 1995; Gardner and Miller, 1999); Interactions between a counsellor and learners (Voller, 1997)</p>	<p>Feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feedback from learning process, i.e. a learner's self-monitoring, self-assessment, and evaluation of learning (internal source of feedback) (Dickinson, 1987) - Feedback from a teacher (external source), i.e. a combination of self-assessment and teacher's assessment (Harris, 1997) - 'High autonomous learners use their own self-monitoring to improve their learning' (Cotterall, 1995a) 	<p>Feedback: Each learner will receive written feedback in relation to the submission times of their work, i.e. week 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14 (10 times in total).</p>	<p>Feedback: Each learner will receive written feedback in relation to the submission times of their work, i.e. week 6, 8, 10, 12, and 14 (5 times in total).</p>	<p>Feedback: Learner will not receive written feedback since they are not required to submit their work until the end of the course. They are expected to use their self-monitoring for their learning improvement.</p>
<p>Counselling (face-to-face)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Teacher guides learners' human growth and development, and help them explore new ideas about whatever (Rogers, 1951 cited in Ornstein and Hunkins, 2004) - Help and guidance of a teacher must be balanced with a learner's expectation and needs (Brockett and Hiemstra, 1993) - 'High autonomous learners use their own self-monitoring to improve their learning' (Cotterall, 1995a) 	<p>Counselling (face-to-face): Each learner is required to meet a teacher every two weeks, i.e. once during weeks 5-6, weeks 7-8, weeks 9-10, 11-12, weeks 13-14 (5 times in total). Each time of the counselling will take approximately 15-20 minutes with appointments made in advance.</p>	<p>Counselling (face-to-face): Each learner is required to meet a teacher every month, i.e. July, August, and September (3 times in total). Each time of the counselling will take approximately 15-20 minutes with appointments made in advance.</p>	<p>Counselling (face-to-face): Learners are not required to meet a teacher. However, each of them can have a face-to-face counselling whenever they want by making appointments.</p>		

2.10 Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 covers the review of related literature on the involved variables in this study. It commenced with a review of the relevant theories on learner independence, i.e. learner-centredness which places emphasis on independent learning. In addition, learner autonomy and the theories of knowledge of positivism, constructivism, and critical theory were reviewed based on Benson's (1997) work. Next, learner autonomy was discussed in more details by exploring the terminology overview, components of autonomy, degrees of autonomy, characteristics of autonomous learners, and justifications for promoting learner autonomy. However, it is argued that learners cannot become independent learners by whatever reasons. They need to be trained and this led to the learner training which is one of the central themes of this study.

The learner training was composed of psychological and methodological preparations. The former focused on changing attitudes towards independent learning, developing confidence, and self-esteem of the learner. The latter emphasised on strategy training comprising cognitive strategies relating to language learning, and metacognitive strategies relating to learning management. The benefits of learner training could not be denied and it gave rise to the inclusion of learner training in this present study.

Supporting learner in independent learning was explored on the roles of teacher in particular as a counsellor since the teacher/researcher of this study took the crucial role as a counsellor. Self-assessment was also reviewed based on the justification that independent learners need to be able to judge their own learning performance. Record keeping of students' independent learning as one research instrument of this study was therefore inspired by the value of self-assessment. Besides that, learner contract which is another way to support learners for their learning planning was discussed.

After that, WBI was reviewed with the major argument that WBI was the most innovative technology for independent learning due to its authentic materials and self-contained feature, which is appropriate to be used to promote independent learning.

Level of proficiency which is another independent variable besides the degrees of support for learner independence was one factor that shows learner difference. However, as pointed out earlier research seems to be conducted to implement the same degree of independence with learners of different proficiency levels. Therefore, the second hypothesis was set to explore the effects of proficiency levels on English reading comprehension ability of students exposed to different degrees of support for independence. To add value to the findings, the interaction effect of degrees of

independence and levels of proficiency on English reading comprehension ability will be explored and therefore the third hypothesis was set accordingly.

Next, the Chapter reviewed the English reading and focused on the bottom-up, top-down, and interactive models. Understanding the nature of reading and use of the reading process models can help improve students' reading skills. Also, research indicates that computer technology facilitates reading comprehension and can enhance independence. Thus, the reading skill receives an attention as being the dependent variable in this study.

After that, related research was investigated with an emphasis on the relationship between independent learning and every research variable of this study. Besides the findings on the effect of independent learning on learning achievement, research shows that learners being trained or taught by the independent mode of learning are prone to have a positive attitude towards independence and its value. Therefore, the fourth and fifth hypotheses were generated to test whether students' attitudes towards learner independence will be highly increased at the end of the course.

The final part deals with the criteria or dimensions used to classify degrees of support for learner independence which was the major theme of this study, based on the points of view of several scholars in the field. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is no research carried out to foster independence through different degrees of independence on teacher's support. Therefore, this study would like to investigate the effects of different degrees of support for independence fostered through WBI on students' reading comprehension ability. This led to the first hypothesis.