CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

t study was carried out to investigate the readiness for language learning of the English major students at Naresuan on, it aimed to examine whether there were any differences in nous English language learning between students with high and icy levels.

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literature on language education, there are many variations upon the nomy. That is, in language teaching and learning, the concept of en described and defined in lots of ways and different terms have iterature (Dafei, 2007). Thus, it is important that this chapter begins and definition of autonomous learning in the context of the present

1. Theoretical Concepts of Autonomous Learning

As can be observed, the terms autonomous learning, independent learning, and self-directed learning are often used interchangeably in the literature. In general, no matter what the term is used, the main idea of it usually focuses on the learning that learners are to take control over their own learning. When it comes to the definitions of autonomy, the most frequently cited definition is that of Holec (1981).

According to Holec (1981), autonomy is described as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" (p. 3). That is, learners take upon themselves the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of learning which are setting learning goals, defining the contents and learning progress, selecting methods and techniques used for learning, monitoring learning process, and evaluating what has been acquired.

Similarly, Boud (1988) proposed that "the main characteristic of autonomy is that students take some significant responsibility for their own learning over and above responding to instruction" (p.23).

Agreeing with the concepts of autonomy suggested by Holec and Boud, Cotterall (1995) defined autonomy as "the ability to use a set of tactics for taking control of their learning" (p.195). This "set of tactics" includes setting goals, choosing materials and tasks, planning practice opportunities, and mornitoring and evaluating progress.

Likewise, Benson (2001) defined autonomy as "the capacity to take control of one's own learning" (p.2).

Finch (2002) compiled the possible definitions of autonomy in the literature on language education proposed by many researchers as follows:

Table 1 The Definitions of Autonomy in Second Language Learning

Author	Definition of autonomy
Holec (1980, p.4)	"…an ability, a power or capacity to do something" (Concise Oxford Dictionary) "and not a type of conduct, behavior. …To say of a learner that he is autonomous is therefore to say that he is capable of taking charge of his own learning and nothing more."
Holec (1981, p.3)	"…the ability to take charge of one's own learning. …This ability is not inborn but must be acquired either by "natural" mean or (as most often happens) by formal learning, in a systematic, deliberate way."
Young (1986, p.19)	"The fundamental idea in autonomy is that of authoring one's own world without being subject to the will of others."
Dickinson (1987, p.11)	"…complete responsibility for one's learning, carried out without the involvement of a teacher or pedagogic materials."
Boud (1988, p.23)	"The main characteristic of autonomy as an approach to learning is that students take some significant responsibility for their own learning over and above responding to instruction."
Hunt, Gow and Barnes (1989, p.209)	"…the decision-making process involved in identifying problems and making relevant decisions for their solution through access to sufficient sources of information."
Allwright (1990, p.12)	"…a constantly changing but at any time optimal state of equilibrium between maximal self-development and human interdependence."
Little (1991, p.4)	"…a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making and independent action."
Legutke and Thomas (1991, p.207)	"…the ability to assume responsibility for one's own affairs (see Holec 1980). …the ability to act in a situation in which he [the learner] is totally responsible for all the decisions concerned with his learning and the implementation of the decision."

Table 1 (Cont.)

Author	Definition of autonomy
Wenden (1991b, p.15)	"… 'successful' or 'expert' or 'intelligent' learners have learned how to learn. They have acquired the learning strategies, the knowledge about learning, and the attitudes that enable them to use these skills and knowledge confidently, flexibly, appropriately and independently of a teacher. Therefore, they are autonomous.
Dickinson (1992, p.330)	"…an attitude towards learning in which the learner is prepared to take, or does take, responsibility for his own learning."
Cotterall (1995b, p.195)	"…the extent to which learners demonstrate the ability to use a set of tactics for taking control of their learning."
Benson (1996, p.34)	"Autonomization is necessarily a transformation of the learner as a social individual. …Autonomy not only transforms individuals, it also transforms the social situations and structures in which they are participants."
Littlewood (1996, p.428)	"We can define an autonomous person as one who has an independent capacity to make and carry out the choices which govern his or her actions. This capacity depends on two main components: ability and willingness. …Ability depends on possessing both knowledge about the alternatives from which choices have to be made and the necessary skills for carrying out whatever choices seem most appropriate. Willingness depends on having both the motivation and the confidence to take responsibility for the choices required."

From the review of definitions of autonomy, it appears to be that most definitions similarly agree on the aspect of responsibility for learning on the part of learners. That is, to become autonomous learners, ones need to be able and willing to take responsibility for their own learning.

Usuki (2007) concluded the key terms of learner autonomy indicating the necessity for learners to actively and willingly accept responsibility for their own learning.

Table 2 The Key Terms of Learner Autonomy

Author	Key term of learner autonomy
Holec (1981)	taking charge of one's own learning
Boud (1988)	an ability to decide by themselves
Dickinson (1995)	having a capacity or attitude
Dam (1995)	willingness to act independently in cooperation with others
Little (1995)	willingness to accept responsibility
Hotho-Jackson (1995)	being aware that human beings are social creatures
Cotterall (1995)	using tactics for taking control of their learning
Littlewood (1996)	self-regulation process
Pierson (1996)	maintaining the locus of control
Sinclair (1996, 1997)	having internal capacity of the learner
Pennycook (1997)	recognizing learners' rights
Benson and Voller (1997)	meaning of self-mastery, freedom, reflective activity
Benson and Lor (1998)	being able to control oneself (student)

Based on the definitions reviewed so far, autonomous learning in the current study refers to the learning that learners take responsibilities for their own learning. These learning responsibilities involve setting learning goals, defining the contents and learning progress, selecting methods and techniques used for learning, monitoring learning process, and evaluating what has been acquired.

As indicated earlier, to engage in autonomous learning, learners need to have a capacity to learn autonomously. According to Littlewood (1996), the capacity of autonomous learning depends on two main components: ability and willingness. Ability refers to the knowledge and skills to make appropriate choices for learning.

Willingness refers to the motivation and the confidence to take responsibility for the choices required. In addition, as suggested by Dickinson (1995), autonomy can be seen as an attitude towards learning. That is, in order to approach autonomous learning, learners should have positive views of learning responsibility and be prepared to assume responsibility for their own learning. This idea is also emphasized by Sinclair (2000) pointing that developing positive attitudes is crucial to the success of the developing of autonomy.

According to the ideas proposed by Holec, 1981; Dickinson, 1995; ittlewood, 1996 learners who are to succeed in autonomous learning, therefore, need to have the capacity of autonomous learning which comprises ability, motivation, confidence, and positive views of learning responsibility to direct their own learning.

Together with the concepts of autonomous learning, characteristics of autonomous learners have been defined in a number of ways. The next section reviews profiles of learners capable of autonomous learning.

2. Characteristics of Autonomous Learners

In language teaching and learning, there have long been several attempts to describe the characteristics of autonomous learners associated with the concepts of autonomy in the literature.

Holec (1981) suggested that "the autonomous learner is himself capable of making all these decisions concerning the learning with which he is or wishes to be involved" (p.3). That is, the autonomous learner is a person who is able to direct his/her own learning by making decisions on self-directed learning activities including determining learning goals, defining the contents and learning progress, selecting methods and techniques to learn, monitoring learning process, and evaluating what has been acquired (Holec, 1981).

Candy (1991) specified the characteristics of autonomous learners grouped under 13 headings as follows:

1. be methodical and disciplined
2. be logical and analytical
3. be reflective and self-aware
4. demonstrate curiosity, openness and motivation
5. be flexible

6. be interdependent and interpersonally competent
7. be persistent and responsible
8. be venturesome and creative
9. show confidence and have a positive self-concept
10. be independent and self-sufficient
11. have developed information seeking and retrieval skills
12. have knowledge about, and skill at, learning processes
13. develop and use criteria for evaluating

Dam (1995), holding the similar ideas specified by Holec and Candy, proposed that "a learner qualifies as an autonomous learner when he independently chooses aims and purposes and sets goals; chooses materials, methods and tasks; exercises choice and purpose in organizing and carrying out the chosen tasks; and chooses criteria for evaluation" (p.45).

Littlewood (1996) hold that "we can define an autonomous person as one who has an independent capacity to make and carry out the choices which govern his or her actions" (p.428). According to Littlewood (1996), to be successful in acting autonomously, the learner needs to have knowledge and skills to carry out appropriate choices for learning. He/she also needs to be motivated and confident to take responsibility for his/her own learning.

Usuki (2007) compiled the characteristics of autonomous learners defined by various researchers. She further suggested that these characteristics indicate autonomous learners to be a) actively engaged in the learning process; b) encouraged by the teacher/instructor to be involved and c) managing the learning process.

Table 3 Definitions of Autonomous Learners

Author	Characteristic of autonomous learners
Holec (1981)	Being capable of taking charge of his own learning and making all the decisions concerning with which he is or wishes to be involved.
Boud (1988)	The autonomous learners act according to their own mind and must be free not only from direction by others external to themselves but also from their own inner compulsions and rigidities.
Dickinson (1989)	Having total responsibility for making and implementing all of the decisions concerned with his own learning.
Wenden (1991)	Willingness to take the responsibility for their own learning. Being self-confident learners; autonomous learners believe in their ability to learn and to self-direct or manage their learning.
Dickinson (1995)	Having capacity for being active and independent in the learning process; autonomous learners can identify goals, formulate their own goals; and can change goals to suit their own learning needs and interests.
Dam (1995)	Taking active part in the social processes of learning.
Breen and Mann (1997)	Showing a desire to learn, a robust sense of self, etacognitive capacity, management of change, independence and a apacity to negotiate.
Benson (1998)	Autonomous learners show awareness of the aims and processes in learning and are aware of traditional pedagogical measures.
Little (1999)	Being able to accept responsibility for their learning, autonomous learners constantly reflect on what they are learning, why they are learning, how they are learning, and with what degree of success.

According to the descriptions discussed so far, autonomous learners are particularly characterized as those who take active roles in their learning, whether in or outside classroom contexts. Autonomous learners are initiative, motivated, and confident to take responsibility for their own learning and have ability and positive views to independently set learning goals, choose learning materials, content, and methods, monitor learning process, make use of opportunities to improve their learning, and evaluate learning progress.

Given the concepts of autonomous learning and the qualities autonomous learners possess, it seems essential that learner autonomy is promoted in every educational setting where aims to produce independent and life-long learners. However, suggestions have been made to pay attention to the readiness of learners to learn autonomously before making any attempt to encourage autonomy in a particular learning context. The necessity of investigation on learners' readiness for autonomous language learning is discussed in the following section.

Readiness for Autonomous Language Learning

Considering vital aspects of autonomous learning and characteristics of autonomous learners, educators may wish to empower autonomous learning for all learners. However, encouraging learners to involve a greater degree of autonomy is not an easy process. This is due to the fact that autonomous learning ability is not innate (Victori and Lockhart, 1995). Thus, it should not be assumed from the start that learners are fully independent (Chu, 1998) and ready to accept responsibility for their own learning. In addition, as emphasized by Yıldırım (2005, 2008), autonomy is perceived and manifested in different ways according to different cultural and educational conditions. Fostering learner autonomy may work in one learning context but such application may cause negative results in another learning context. Based on the literature review, Yıldırım (2005, p.45) remarked:

...Therefore, literature suggests that before making any attempt promote learner autonomy in a learning environment, we should investigate what the students and teachers of that learning environment know, feel and do about learner autonomy. We can suggest an appropriate plan for fostering

learner autonomy only after making such an investigation because the results of the investigation would provide guidance for teachers about how best to implement autonomy (Chan, 2001; Cotterall, 1995; Cotterall 1999; Spratt, Humphreys and Chan, 2002; Chan, Spratt and Humphreys, 2002; Koçak, 2003).

Therefore, it seems necessary for the present study to be conducted to investigate students' readiness for autonomous language learning. This is in order to prepare an appropriate plan to promote autonomous language learning in the educational context where the current study was carried out.

Many researchers (Cotterall, 1995, 1999; Spratt, Humphreys and Chan 2002; Koçak, 2003; Rukthong, 2008, Yıldırım, 2005, 2008) assert the necessity to examine learners' readiness for autonomous language learning before intervention measures to foster autonomy are implemented in classrooms. According to these researchers, several factors; learners' beliefs, motivation, responsibility attitudes, confidence, use of metacognitive strategies, and engagement in outside class activities in learning a language; have influences on learners' readiness for language learning autonomy. Cotterall (1995) argued that learners' beliefs could reflect the readiness for autonomy. In addition, Deci and Ryan (1985) and Dickinson (1995), proposed that there is an important link between autonomy and motivation. Thanasoulas (2000) hold that learners' use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies, attitudes, motivation and self-esteem in language learning are vital factors facilitating the development of learner autonomy. Similarly, according to the study carried out by Spratt, Humphreys, and Chan (2002), four variables in relation to learners' views of learning responsibilities, confidence, motivation, and engagement in outside class activities affect learners' readiness for autonomy in language learning.

Following are previous studies on learners' readiness for autonomous language learning carried out in different learning contexts.

Cotterall (1995) conducted a study to investigate learners' beliefs about language learning and the effects of each belief on autonomous language learning. The subjects in this study were 139 adult ESL learners enrolling in an intensive English for Academic Purposes course. The researcher administered a set of

questionnaire to the subjects to collect data and used factor analysis to identify the dimensions underlying learner beliefs. Factor analysis of subjects' responses to the questionnaire revealed six dimensions in learner beliefs: role of the teacher, role of feedback, learner independence, learner confidence in study ability, and approach to studying. The researcher proposed that these beliefs in six areas were likely to reflect learners' readiness for autonomy and such beliefs should be explored before making any attempt to foster autonomy.

In an extension of her earlier study, Cotterall (1999) examined learners' beliefs about language learning. Based on the structure of learners' beliefs identified in the earlier study (Cotterall, 1995) and the review of SLA literature, the researcher developed a set of questionnaire to explore learners' beliefs in six areas: the role of the teacher, the role of feedback, the learner's sense of self-efficacy, important strategies, dimensions of strategies-related behavior, and the nature of language learning. The subjects were 131 learners of English enrolled on three different English language courses at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. The results revealed that learners' beliefs relating these six dimensions played important roles in language learning, particularly in autonomous language learning.

Spratt, Humphreys, and Chan (2002) carried out a study to gauge students' readiness for learner autonomy in language learning. The subjects of the study were 508 students studying at Hong Kong Polytechnic University. In this study, the researchers developed a set of questionnaire which was strongly influenced by Holec's (1981) definition of autonomy "the ability to take charge of one's own learning". The questionnaire designed was composed of four main parts: students' perceptions of their teachers' and their own responsibilities, students' confidence in their abilities to learn autonomously, students' level of motivation, and students' engagement in inside or outside class learning activities. The findings were that the students perceived the teacher as one who took greater responsibility for language learning in classroom contexts. Nevertheless, they agreed to be more responsible for their own learning in terms of outside class learning activities. As for motivation, the students identified themselves as being "motivated" in learning English. The results further revealed that of the 22 outside class activities, there were 10 activities which the majority of the students engaged in. In particular,

the researchers concluded that motivation was a key factor that influenced the extent to which learners were ready to operate autonomously.

In a similar vein, Yıldırım (2008) studied Turkish EFL learners' readiness for autonomous learning. The participants in this study were 103 first year students attending the Faculty of Education in Anadolu University, Turkey. The data were gained by mean of a set of questionnaire adapted from Spratt, Humphreys, and Chan (2002). The questionnaire consisted of three main parts: learners' perceptions of teacher and learner responsibilities, learners' views of their abilities to behave autonomously, and learners' engagement in outside class learning activities. The results showed that for most of the classroom actions, the students had an idea of sharing responsibility with the teachers. Also the students perceived themselves capable of performing autonomously. Concerning the outside class activities, it was found that most students already engaged in some outside class learning activities, which could be regarded as manifestation of autonomous behavior. From all these findings, the researcher concluded that the Turkish EFL students were ready for autonomous learning.

In Thai EFL context, Rukthong (2008) investigated readiness for autonomous English language learning of Thai University students. The data were collected through two sets of questionnaires, a self-report, and an individual interview. In order to determine whether the students were ready to act autonomously, the researcher focused on learners' beliefs and their use of learning strategies in EFL learning. The learner belief questionnaire was generated based on Cotterall's (1999) dimensions of learner beliefs while the language learning strategy questionnaire was that of Oxford's (1990) strategy inventory for language learning (SILL), a version for speakers of other languages learning English. The participants were 174 English major students in one Thai University. The findings showed that the participants still regarded learning responsibilities as their teachers'. Moreover, they believed they didn't have enough knowledge to improve their own learning and engage in self-directed learning activities. This is despite the fact that they had willingness and acceptance to improve and manage their own learning. As for their use of learning strategies, it was found that some metacognitive strategies especially for planning, monitoring, and evaluating were rarely used by the participants.

The researcher concluded that the participants were not fully ready to learn autonomously.

Ngamdee, Pothisuwan and Thunjoy (2009) conducted a study to assess the readiness for English language learning autonomy of distance education program students at Naresuan University and to study the relationship between the readiness for autonomous language learning and their English achievement. In so doing, the researchers used a set of questionnaire as the research instrument designed to focus on three areas: students' dependence on teachers, students' confidence to learn on their own, and students' personal readiness. The subjects of the study were 12 first year students studying Business Administration majoring in Tourism Industry Management. The results showed that the students relied on a teacher at high level. However, the students were found to have high confidence to act autonomously and to have high personal readiness. Overall, the students' readiness in English learning autonomy was at moderate level. Moreover, the findings revealed a significant relationship between the students' readiness for autonomous language learning and their English achievement. This study suggested that the three factors: students' dependence on teachers, confidence to learn on their own, and personal readiness were important for investigating students' readiness for autonomous language learning and revealed that NU students were ready to learn language autonomously at moderate level. The study, however, employed only quantitative data collection method to gain information from the participants. Moreover, some vital factors influencing the extent to which students are ready to learn language autonomously are still left unexplored.

Another study on learners' readiness for autonomous language learning was carried out by Rungwaraphong (2012). The study investigated the extent to which students at a university in Thailand were ready to exercise autonomy in their learning. To gather information from the students, the researcher used a questionnaire designed to examine three aspects related to learner autonomy: learner's perceptions of teacher's role and of themselves, locus of control, and strategies employed by learners in their learning process. The questionnaire was administered to 91 students enrolled in a writing course of the university used in this case study. The findings suggest that the majority of the students were not yet ready for learner autonomy.

However, although not yet fully prepared for learning autonomously, many of the students displayed the potential for being assisted to become more autonomous.

So far, this section discusses the necessity of investigation on learners' readiness for autonomous language learning before any attempt to encourage autonomous learning in educational contexts and relevant studies are reviewed. According to the review of previous studies, several factors are found to reflect the readiness of learners for autonomous language learning. However, although a variety of factors have been accepted to condition the development of learner autonomy, the current study was limited to focus on three intrinsic factors: students' perceptions of their own responsibilities, motivation, and confidence in their ability to learn English language autonomously. The next section presents how these variables affect the development of autonomous language learning.

Factors Conditioning Learners' Readiness for Autonomous Language Learning

With the aim to investigate students' readiness for autonomous English language learning, the present study was designed to examine three psychological factors: students' responsibility perceptions, motivation, and confidence in English learning. Psychological variables play crucial roles in autonomous language learning. That is, according to Benson (2001), the way in which individuals learn languages and the outcomes of their learning efforts are influenced by a variety of individual psychological variables. In the same way, Cotterall (1995) stated that the beliefs and attitudes learners hold have a profound influence on their learning behavior. For example, learners who have positive attitude towards learning responsibility and self- sufficiency tend to be more responsible and confident in their language learning. As suggested by Dickinson (1987), psychological preparation is a process of developing learners' self-confidence in their ability to work independently of the teacher, and of developing positive attitude towards language learning. Accordingly, Thanasoulas (2000) proposed that affective variables including learners' attitudes, motivation, and self-esteem in language learning influence the development of autonomous language learning. Thanosoulas (2000) wrote:

…Language learning is not merely a cognitive task. Learners do not only reflect on their learning in terms of the language input to which they are exposed, or the optimal strategies they need in order to achieve the goals they set. Rather, the success of a learning activity is, to some extent, contingent upon learners' stance towards the world and the learning activity in particular, their sense of self, and their desire to learn (see Benson and Voller, 1997, pp.134-136). … if learners labour under the misconception that learning is successful only within the context of the "traditional classroom," where the teacher directs, instructs, and manages the learning activity, and students must follow in the teacher's footsteps, they are likely to be impervious or resistant to learner-centred strategies aiming at autonomy, and success is likely to be undermined.

Based on what the researchers have suggested here, the three psychological factors the present study intended to investigate included:

1. Students' perceptions of their own responsibilities in English learning
2. Students' motivation in English learning
3. Students' confidence in their ability to learn English autonomously.

1. Responsibilities

The first factor facilitating the development of learner autonomy is the notion of responsibility on the part of learners. Autonomy and responsibility are apparently very much interrelated (Scharle and Szabo, 2000). Considering the definitions of learner autonomy defined by several researchers, it is obvious that a key aspect that has been consistently highlighted through its history is learners being responsible for their own learning (Holec, 1988; Dickinson, 1995 as cited in Vasuvat and Intratat, 2010)

Holec (1981), for example, defined autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" (p.3). That is, to take charge of one's own learning is to have, and to hold, the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of learning. Dickinson (1995) also argued that "autonomy can be seen as an attitude towards learning in which the learner is prepared to take, or does take, responsibility for his own learning" (p.167). Scharle and Szabo (2000) suggested that in order to

foster learner autonomy, teachers clearly need to develop a sense of responsibility on the part of learners.

As for teachers' roles, Voller (1997) proposed that in autonomous learning, the teacher is regarded as **facilitator**, in which the teacher is seen as providing support for learning; **counselor**, where the emphasis is placed on one-to-one interaction; and **resource**, in which the teacher is seen as a source of knowledge and expertise.

For this reason, in order to become more autonomous in their own language learning, learners need to be prepared to assume responsibility for all aspects of learning including determining learning goals, defining the contents and learning progress, selecting methods and techniques used for learning, monitoring learning process, and evaluating what has been acquired.

Many previous studies have been found to highlight the importance of learners' attitudes towards teachers' responsibilities and learners' responsibilities, or teachers' roles and learners' roles, as the fundamental condition for the development of autonomous learning. Cotterall (1995), for example, studied learners' beliefs and attitudes about language learning with regard to their autonomous language learning. By mean of factor analysis, it was found that there were six dimensions underlying learners' beliefs, one of which was the role of the teacher. In this respect, the researcher stated that learners who believed the teacher should take responsibility for their language learning were not yet ready for autonomy. As claimed by Cotterall, for teachers aiming to prepare learners to work more independently, much attention should be paid to awareness-raising about language learning processes and a gradual transfer of responsibility.

Since the fundamental principle of learner autonomy is learners taking responsibility for their own learning, one way to access readiness of learners for autonomous language learning is to investigate learners' perceptions of their own responsibilities for various aspects of their language learning. Apart from responsibility attitudes, motivation is another key factor encouraging the development of learner autonomy. The next section discusses the ways in which motivation exerts an influence on autonomous language learning.

2. Motivation

It has been widely accepted that there is a strong relationship between motivation and autonomy. Motivation has also been regarded as a key factor contributing to more effective language learning.

Dickinson's (1995) review article on autonomy and motivation pointed out an important link between motivation and autonomy. The researcher argued that when learners engage in autonomous learning, being concerned to control their own learning and to take responsible for it, they become more motivated in their learning. According to Dickinson, learners' active and independent involvement in their own learning (autonomy) generates motivation to learn and consequently leads to success in language learning. Dickinson (1995, p.174) concluded:

> …learning success and enhanced motivation is conditional on learners taking responsibility for their own learning, being able to control their own learning and perceiving that their learning successes or failures are to be attributed to their own efforts and strategies rather than to factors outside their control.

Similarly, Deci and Ryan's (1985 as cited in Dickinson, 1995) self-determination theory argued that intrinsic motivation leads to more effective learning and that it is promoted in circumstances in which the learner is self-determined and the locus of control is with the learner. The researchers made a distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to learners' engagement in a learning activity for the enjoyment and satisfaction of the activity itself while extrinsic motivation refers to engagement in a learning activity of learners for its instrumental value such as receiving a reward or avoiding a punishment (Ryan and Deci, 2000). In other words, intrinsically motivated learners carry out learning activities for their own sake rather than for external rewards. On the other hand, learners who are extrinsically motivated carry out learning activities either for reasons other than interest in the activity itself or because they are subject to external pressures. According to Deci and Ryan, self-determination (autonomy) leads to intrinsic motivation, which in turn leads to more effective language learning.

Littlewood (1996) also stressed the importance of motivation in autonomous learning. He considered motivation one of the four fundamental components that make up learner autonomy. That is, to approach autonomous learning, learners need to have knowledge, skills, motivation, and confidence to direct their own learning. Unlike Deci and Ryan and Dickinson, Littlewood regards motivation as a necessary precursor of autonomy.

Spratt, Humphreys and Chan (2002) seemed to agree with the direction of relationship between motivation and autonomy proposed by Littlewood. They conducted a study to investigate students' readiness for autonomous language learning at Hong Kong Polytechnic University. In addition, the study attempted to examine the relationship between motivation and autonomy in language learning. The findings revealed that there was a significant relationship between motivation and frequency of engagement in autonomous learning activities outside the classroom. Follow-up interviews were carried out to find the reasons for the low uptake of many activities. The interview data indicated that for the participants, absence of motivation seemed to inhibit practice of learner autonomy. Based on the results from the study, the researchers concluded that motivation was a key factor that influenced the extent to which learners were ready to learn autonomously. From this conclusion, motivation is seen as a precondition for autonomy.

As emphasized by the researchers above, motivation in language learning plays critical roles in autonomous language learning. Though there has been a controversy on the direction of relationship between motivation and autonomy, whether motivation leads to autonomy or autonomy leads to motivation, the researchers appear to agree on a strong link between motivation and autonomy. In order to determine learners' involvement in autonomous language learning, it is essential to take learners' motivation in language learning into consideration.

The last factor the present study attempted to investigate was learners' confidence in their ability to learn autonomously. The next section discusses the roles of learners' confidence on the development of autonomous language learning.

3. Confidence

Learners' confidence plays vital roles in language learning. Ebata (2008) proposed that self-confidence is the most important factor in language learning. With self-confidence, learners will be motivated and become positive about their own language learning. It is self-confidence that creates the drive in learners to acquire the language they are trying to learn, enjoy the learning process, and use the target language in the real situation. Learners who lack of self-confidence are unlikely to accomplish the language they are learning.

Particularly, learners' belief in their ability is considered as an important condition for development of autonomous language learning. Cotterall (1999) investigated a range of learners' beliefs in language learning including self-efficacy beliefs, or beliefs in one's ability to accomplish a task (Graham, 2006). It was found that while learners expressed a willingness to adopt and accept responsibility for the use of some key strategies, few believed that they knew how to monitor and evaluate their learning. The researcher argued that the learners' inability to use strategies for monitoring and evaluating learning, the important strategies for autonomous language learning process, was linked to a lack of confidence that a number of learners showed. According to Breen and Mann (1997, p.134), autonomous language learners are likely to have "a robust sense of self". They wrote:

> …autonomous learners' relationship to themselves as learners is one which is unlikely to be undermined by any actual or assumed negative assessments of themselves or their work by significant others in the teaching-learning process. Assessment can be used by the autonomous learner as a potentially rich source of feedback or can be discarded if it is judged to be irrelevant or unhelpful.

If learners have a robust sense of self, their relationship to themselves as learners is unlikely to be undermined by any negative assessments. On the other hand, if learner lack of confidence, they are prone to have negative attitudes towards their capability as learners and view themselves as incapable of learning. Likewise, Schunk (1994 as cited in Cubukcu, 2009) suggested that self regulation depends

upon students feeling confident in their ability to accomplish learning tasks. Those engaging in autonomous learning tend to have high self-confidence to carry out a task, participate more readily, work harder, and persist longer when they encounter difficulties.

According to Littlewood (1996), confidence has an influence on autonomous language learning. Littlewood suggested that there are two main components that make up autonomy in language learning. They are ability and willingness. Ability refers to the knowledge and skills for carrying out appropriate choices for learning. Willingness refers to the motivation and the confidence to take responsibility for the choices required. Those engaging in autonomous language learning process, thus, need to have knowledge, skills, motivation, and confidence to participate in self-directed language learning activities. Littlewood (1996, p.428) stated:

> …We can define an autonomous person as one who has an independent capacity to make and carry out the choices which govern his or her actions. This capacity depends on two main components: **ability** and **willingness**. …Ability depends on possessing both **knowledge** about the alternatives from which choices have to be made and the necessary **skills** for carrying out whatever choices seem most appropriate. Willingness depends on having both the **motivation** and the **confidence** to take responsibility for the choices required. If a person is to be successful in acting autonomously, all of these four components need to be present together.

Theoretically, in order to become autonomous in their language learning, learners should have confidence to direct their own learning. Considering the characteristics of autonomous learners defined by many researchers, it appears to be that self-confidence is an important characteristic that autonomous learners possess. With self-confidence, learners are likely to be positive about their own potentials and usually perceive themselves as a potentially rich source of feedback. Because of this, it becomes necessary to highlight learners' confidence to direct their

own learning as a facilitating factor in the development of autonomous language learning.

So far, this section explains how the psychological factors influence the development of autonomous language learning. It is generally agreed that in order to determine whether learners are ready to operate autonomously, learners' perceptions of responsibilities, motivation, and confidence in language learning should be taken into consideration.

Given what several researchers have proposed, autonomy is vital for language learning process. That is, the development of autonomy implies better language learning. Autonomous learning is a desirable goal of language education (Benson, 2001). However, since the concept of autonomy originated in Western countries (Rukthong, 20008), it is possible to assume that there may be some difficulties if autonomous learning is promoted in Asian learning cultures, where the present study is conducted. The next section discusses cultural appropriateness of fostering autonomous learning in Asian educational contexts.

Fostering Autonomous Learning in Asian Educational Contexts

Most definitions of autonomy reported by many researchers are associated with Western individualism, and as such might be unsuitable for Asian contexts (Littlewood, 1999). Due to the fact that learner autonomy emphasizes students' engagement in their own learning, in autonomous learning process, learners are usually required to take an initiative role. Individuals who are involved in autonomous learning need to accept responsibility for all the decisions concerned with their learning. Without teacher control, they must take the initiative in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes (Knowles, 1975). Such learning aspects reflect the transfer of responsibility for learning from the teacher to the learner. However, in Asian educational settings, teachers have usually been recognized as authorities who dominate classroom events (Higg, 1988; Holec, 1987 as cited in Rukthong, 2008). In a classroom, a teacher is a person who transmits knowledge and skills to students, evaluates and corrects the students' performance. The students are

relatively passive recipients of knowledge who expect the teacher to be totally responsible for their learning (Thamraksa, 2003). Asian learners have continuously been perceived as passive, teacher-dependent, and unable to engage in independent learning (Gan, 2004). Accordingly, Usuki (2007) stated that for Asian learners, the notion of learner autonomy challenges the traditional roles of the teacher as initiator of knowledge, controller of that knowledge, and authority figure in the teaching-learning process. Asian educational cultures tend to place students in a passive role that perceive the teacher as the final authority. Considering what the researchers have pointed out here, it seems to be that the Western idea of autonomous learning might not appropriate for Asian learning cultures. Learners may feel uncomfortable and resistant to learn autonomously and as such will be unable to develop their autonomous learning capacity.

However, it has been argued that cultural differences may not be the main obstacle to the promotion of the idea of autonomous learning in Asian countries. Rather, fostering autonomous learning has to do with specific factors in a particular learning context, such as teaching methodologies. This is due to the fact that different contexts exist even in the same culture. Contextual differentiation often occurs due to individual teacher differences within a culture or institution (Usuki, 2007). With the right support and environment and well-plan teaching, as claimed by many researchers (Aoki and Smith, 1999; Chan, 2001; Littlewood, 1999; Jones, 1995 as cited in Ya-Hui Chang, 2007), learners within Asian contexts could succeed in autonomous learning.

As indicated previously, the aspect of autonomous learning is crucial for language learning. It has been claimed that autonomy could, to some extent, lead to greater success in language learning. Since the current study also intended to explore whether there were significant differences in readiness of students for autonomous language learning regarding their English proficiency levels, it is important to address the literature on autonomy relating effective language learning. The link between autonomous learning and effective language learning is discussed in the following section.

Autonomous Learning and Effective Language Learning

Effective language learning has consistently been associated with learner autonomy. That is, autonomous learning is more effective than non-autonomous learning. The development of autonomy implies better language learning (Benson, 2001). This is because learners learn better when they take control over their own learning. When learners engage in making choices and decisions about what they are learning, learning becomes more purposive, meaningful, permanent, and effective. In addition, learners taking charge of their own learning process are likely to feel motivated to learn and as such will become successful in their learning. According to Knowles (1975), autonomous learners learn better than do non-autonomous learners. Knowles (1975, p.14) contended:

> ...there is convincing evidence that people who take the initiative in learning (proactive learners) learn more things and learn better than do people who sit at the feet of teachers, passively waiting to be taught (reactive learners)... They enter into learning more purposefully and with greater motivation.

Similarly, Dickinson (1995) suggested that learners' active and independent involvement in their own learning (autonomy) generates motivation to learn, which in turn leads to better, more effective language learning. Wenden (1991) also pointed out the connection between success in language learning and learner autonomy. Wenden (1991, p.15) mentioned:

> ...In effect, 'successful' or 'expert' or 'intelligent' learners have learned how to learn. They have acquired the learning strategies, the knowledge about learning, and the attitudes that enable them to use these skills and knowledge confidently, flexibly, appropriately and independently of a teacher. Therefore, they are autonomous.

Following what the researchers have suggested here, it seems reasonable to conduct a study aiming to examine whether students with high and low English proficiency levels are different regarding their involvement in autonomous English language learning. This is in order to understand how students with different English proficiency levels exercise autonomy in their English language learning.

Related Studies in Thai Educational Contexts

Following are some related studies on readiness for autonomous learning conducted in Thai educational contexts.

Kulsirisawatdi (1994) carried out a study to examine the readiness for self-directed learning of agricultural students and to compare scores of self-directed learning readiness varied to variables of sex, age, curriculums, G.P.A., parents' occupations, students' expected occupations, sizes of colleges, and types of institutions. The participants of the study were 418 students from Chainat Agricultural College, Chonburi Agricultural College, and Agricultural Engineering Training Centre. The data were gained through a set of questionnaire which was developed from Guglielmino's Self-directed Learning Readiness Scale (SDLRS). The results were that the agricultural students were ready for self-directed learning at high level. The SDLRS score was found no statistically significant difference in terms of sex, parents' occupations, students' expected occupations, sizes of colleges, and types of institutions. However, statistically significant differences existed regarding variables of age, G.P.A. and curriculums.

In a similar vein, Naprae (2006) studied the readiness for self-directed learning among nurse managers. The study was aimed to investigate self-directed learning readiness and to examine the relationships between work experience and self-directed learning readiness of nurse managers in Chiang Rai Region Hospital. Self-directed learning readiness scale which was developed by Wilaiporn Maneepan (1996), based on Guglielmino's scale, was employed as a research instrument. The data were collected from 80 nurse administrators. The findings revealed that the overall scores of self-directed learning readiness among nurse managers were at a high level. When each aspect was analyzed, the participants' readiness for self-directed learning was found to be high in every aspect. As for the association

between work experience and self-directed learning readiness, the results showed no significant relationship between the nurse managers' work experience and their readiness for self-directed learning.

With the same data collection method, Pornsawan (2006) investigated self-directed learning readiness among professional nurses. The participants consisted of 206 professional nurses working in Chiang Rai Regional Hospital. The results revealed that most of the professional nurses in Chiang Rai Regional Hospital had high readiness for self-directed learning. When considered in each aspect, the participants were found to be ready for self-directed learning at high degree in almost every aspect except for the aspect of openness to learning opportunities, which the degree of readiness was highest. As for the aspect of creativity, the readiness was at a moderate degree. In addition, the findings showed no significant relationship between the participants' work experience and their self-directed learning readiness.

Another study on readiness for self-directed learning was conducted by Aumkaew (2010) who aimed to examine self-trait and learning environment factors affecting students' self-directed learning readiness. The subjects of the study were 480 Chiangmai University Demonstration School students. The data were collected by two sets of questionnaires. One focused on self-directed learning readiness, self-esteem, future expectation, and achievement motivation and the other focused on learning environment, relationship with teachers, relationship with friends, child care-taking, and leadership. The findings of the study revealed that there were six self-trait and learning environment factors contributing to the readiness for self-directed learning. They were achievement motivation, self-esteem, relationship with teachers, leadership of intelligence, leadership of human relationship, and future expectation, which could predict self-directed learning readiness by 61.1%.

According to the review of related studies conducted in Thai educational contexts, it is found that Thai students have high readiness for self-directed learning or are ready to learn autonomously. However, very few studies have been found to focus on the vital factors of responsibility attitudes, motivation, and confidence in relation to learners' readiness for autonomous learning. Moreover, the studies reviewed were carried out in the context of general education, not in the context of

EFL education. As claimed by several researchers (Spratt, Humphreys and Chan 2002; Cotterall, 1995, 1999; Dickinson, 1995, Rukthong, 2008; Yıldırım, 2005, 2008) responsibility perceptions, motivation, and confidence are crucial factors reflecting learners' readiness for autonomous language learning. In order to determine whether learners are ready to learn language autonomously, it is important to examine these intrinsic factors. For this reason, it seems reasonable for the current study to be conducted to investigate Thai students' readiness for autonomous English language learning by looking into three areas including students' perceptions of their own responsibilities, motivation, and confidence in English learning. In addition, the present study aims to examine whether significant differences exist between high and low proficient students in terms of readiness for autonomous English language learning.

This chapter, so far, has provided theoretical concepts of autonomous learning and characteristics of autonomous learners and has discussed the necessity of investigation on learners' readiness for autonomous learning and the related factors. Cultural appropriateness of fostering autonomous learning in Asian educational contexts has been described. Finally, this chapter has reviewed relevant previous studies conducted in different educational settings, which provides background knowledge of autonomy in L2 learners and how to support learners to develop skills in autonomous learning.

The next chapter presents details of research methodology employed in this study.