The Effect of Integration of a Blended Learning and Extensive Reading Instructional Model on Thai EFL Undergraduate Students' Learner Autonomy

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Abstract

To be able to read well as well as to manage one's own reading is important because it leads to the development of learner autonomy, which is necessary for learners in the 21st century. The present study investigates the effects of integration of a blended learning and extensive reading instructional model on Thai EFL undergraduate students' learner autonomy. This study employed a one-group, pre-test post-test design to collect quantitative data supplemented by the qualitative data from semi-structured interviews. The sample consisted of forty English major students who enrolled in the Reading for Text Interpretation Course at a public university in Suratthani, Thailand. The research instruments included the learner autonomy questionnaire and the learner autonomy interview protocol. The findings revealed that learner autonomy increased with statistical significance after the treatment. Based on the findings, it could be concluded that integration of a blended learning and extensive reading instructional model could be effectively implemented to promote learner autonomy of EFL students.

Keywords: blended learning, extensive reading, learner autonomy, EFL students

Introduction

Extensive reading instruction is an alternative approach to traditional reading instruction. It allows students to read large quantities of reading materials based on their own preferences, which can enhance students' confidence in reading, without fear or anxiety of making mistakes or being frustrated by unsatisfactory reading outcomes (Day, 2015). Students' increase in motivation and involvement with reading could increase reading pleasure along with learner autonomy in their reading and learning process beyond the classroom setting.

Benefits from implementing extensive reading are supported by various scholars (Day & Bamford, 2002; Grabe, 2009; Krashen, 2004). This is because extensive reading allows students to read large quantities of self-selected, accessible, and interesting texts of their own interests and preferences, with less or no teachers' direct intervention. Meanwhile, students' increased motivation may result in increased pleasure in reading (Fisher, 2013), which is beneficial for language acquisition and for the development of reading habits beyond the classroom setting. According to Day and Bamford (2002, p. 30), "students' initial successful experiences in extensive reading result in the discovery that they can read in the second language and that reading is rewarding and pleasurable."

However, in a typical classroom setting in Thailand, some students are often

frustrated when they are asked to read on their own, because they have difficulty understanding what they read and lack confidence in their own reading ability (Akkakoson & Setobol, 2009). Moreover, in every aspect of their classroom activities, students tend to rely too much on teachers (Chandawimol, 1998). Some tend to be dependent and passive recipients who have neither active participation nor engagement in the learning process. Keyuravong and Maneekhao (2006) explain that Thai students often relied on teachers. They believe that teachers act as knowledgeable authorities who should process all the knowledge and transfer the processed knowledge to them. Such an environment does not encourage students to actively process their knowledge since they fail to take responsibility, and constructing new knowledge and skills on their own becomes out of reach. To better the aforementioned situation, promotion of learner autonomy comes into play. The concept of learner autonomy is sometimes misunderstood to be a way that can be realized without a teacher. According to Dam (2000), autonomous learning can develop in an environment created by the teacher, in which learners can actively take charge of their own responsibility in their learning. Little (1991) also notes that learners do not automatically take responsibility for their own learning. Instead, they need teachers to help them become more responsible in their learning. Therefore, interaction and collaboration should be considered as vital factors in promoting autonomous learning, and the more input students have in the process, the more effective learning it should be.

The idea of incorporating learner autonomy into the classroom is supported by various scholars. Little (1995), for instance, suggests that all learning is likely to become successful when learners are autonomous. All the knowledge and skills acquired in the classroom can be applied to the situations outside class. Therefore, teachers should find ways for students to take on responsibilities in their learning process so they can make active contributions to their own learning. Accordingly, learner autonomy is not a process of telling the students to be autonomous. Instead, the process of learning, training, and practicing should be changed from a passive to an active approach (Railton & Watson, 2005), and it is hoped that students' autonomy will eventually emerge.

To enhance learner autonomy, development of knowledge, skills, motivation, and confidence should be promoted. In other words, the four components are important for successful autonomous learning. Students should develop their knowledge and skills as well as increase their motivation and confidence in the learning process. Littlewood (1996, p. 428) asserts that "the more knowledge and skills the students process, the more confident they are likely to feel when asked to perform independently; the more confident they feel, the more they are likely to be able to mobilize their knowledge and skills in order to perform effectively, and so on."

Therefore, integration of extensive reading and learner autonomy reflects that reading instruction should serve students' needs. This is not only to encourage students to read extensively based on their preferences and interest, but also to develop the skills necessary to enhance cognitive and metacognitive skills for reading comprehension. Once students read extensively, they can read and evaluate what they read on their own. According to Hedge (2003), learner autonomy can increase students' motivation to read for different purposes and to become independent readers who can enjoy reading autonomously outside the classroom. When students are familiar with the process of learner autonomy, they can read with a concrete goal, become aware of their success and failure, and evaluate their learning performance. Once they can gain control over their learning process, they are ready to become autonomous learners.

To develop students' strong reading skills while simultaneously enhancing learner autonomy, the implementation of technology in L2 classroom is promising. A study by Hampel and Hauck (2006) has shown that the integration of technology into the classroom

not only offers unlimited sources of knowledge in a target language, but also it increases learner autonomy. Not only does the Internet provide learners with authentic, relevant, and interesting texts, but it also offers them opportunity to communicate with others in the target language outside class (Hanson, Hasan, Smith, & Smith, 2000; Pinkman, 2005). Moreover, it allows learners to work at their own pace on the materials of their own choosing (Blin, 1999; Pinkman, 2005). Additionally, many learners use the Internet mainly in their study because they perceive the Internet to be more useful and enjoyable, hence increases motivation. A study by Warschauer (1996) has shown that use of CMC tools in language learning leads to more student-initiated interactions, a social dynamic based on student-student collaboration, more student-centered discussion, and a shift in authority from the teacher to learners.

At a public university in Suratthani, Thailand, students have generally low reading ability even most of them have been studying English for over ten years. They often face difficulties when though reading English texts due to their lack of knowledge of strategies, vocabulary, sentence structures, cultures, etc. Nuttall (1996) explains that readers who do not understand often slow down their reading rate and do not enjoy reading. As a result, they read slowly, cannot understand the texts, and do not find reading pleasurable. Besides, according to Akkakoson & Setobol (2009), most students take too much time translating a sentence word for word into Thai instead of understanding its meaning as a whole and the relationship of a sentence in a passage. Also, most instructors usually explain everything and tell students the answers to comprehension questions. As a result, students do not have much opportunity to exchange the information with instructors and peers. They only get the information by listening to and taking notes from instructors. Consequently, this method has not been successful because the environment does not encourage students to actively process their knowledge, as instructors control what students learn and at what pace they learn it.

Integration of a blended learning and extensive reading instruction together with reading strategy instruction is a promising tool that allows students to have active exposure to reading materials and activities with less teachers' direct intervention in the technology-enhanced environment. A considerable number of studies on extensive reading have been done in Thailand (Channuan; 2012; Kirin, 2007; Liem, 2005; Pratontep & Chinwonno, 2008), but there have been relatively few studies on blended learning and extensive reading instruction. A possible outcome of implementing blended learning and extensive reading integrated instruction was that students would develop learner autonomy in their own reading process.

Objective of the study

This study examined the effects of integration of a blended learning and extensive reading instructional model on EFL undergraduate students' learner autonomy.

Review of Literature

Blended learning and learner autonomy

Blended learning, as cited by Garrison and Vaughan (2008), refers to the combination of online learning and face-to-face delivery of learning. It is considered one of the most efficient ways to support students' learning because it brings the benefits of online learning and face-to-face delivery of learning together. In general, a blended learning course, which combines a variety of technological tools, offers students with the opportunity to participate in their learning (Sullivan & Pratt, 1996), facilitate discussion and interaction (Vaughan, 2007), and increase motivation to learn the target language (Javis, 2005; Rico & Vinagre, 2000). Since

the nature of blended learning requires both face to face and online activities, successful learners need several strategies to keep them engaged in a blended learning program (Jeffrey et al., 2012). To put in simply, successful learners are often metacognitively, motivationally and behaviorally active participants in their learning process (Zimmerman, 1986). Self-regulated readers, for example, employ cognitive and metacognitive strategies and always engaged in self-regulated learning as well (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1994). According to Maxim (2009), self-regulated learners are closely related to autonomous learners. They are more likely to participate voluntarily in a special project, relied on a planned learning and used more goal setting, planning, organizing, memorizing and self-monitoring strategies. In order to develop such abilities, it is important to train students regarding the use of metacognitive strategies and establish an intrinsic motivation through their learning.

Moreover, there is an agreement that autonomy in language learning is a social construct (Ushioda, 2008; Benson & Cooker, 2013a). It is believed that the development of a learner capacity for autonomy does not happen in isolation, but through social interactions with others, such as peers and teachers (Little, 2007). Social competence development has advantages both in synchronous and asynchronous communication in a blended learning environment. The instructors in this perspective play an important role in designing and adapting the learning contents to students' needs (Klink, 2006) and developing awareness of language learning, as it does not come automatically to most learners. Meanwhile, they have to provide effort, practice, as well as instruction in the learning process. Murphy (2005) argues that learners must be encouraged to enhance their capacities for reflection and self-direction. They should be given an explicit framework to guide their learning process as well as clear rational encouragement, support, and opportunity to practice within the course materials and resources.

Extensive reading and learner autonomy

Extensive reading, as defined by Lituanas, Jacobs, and Renandya (1999), is an approach to foreign language reading instruction that allows students to self-select and read a large quantity of materials for information or pleasure with the immediate focus on the content rather than on language skills. It has become popular in many countries over the last few decades.

A considerable number of studies have revealed a significant relationship between extensive reading and learner autonomy. A study by Zhang and Wu (2009), for example, addresses the issues of extensive reading practice and learner autonomy among Chinese college students. The findings indicate that learner autonomy is closely related with self-efficacy, improved learning strategies, and academic achievement. Moreover, Channuan and Wasanasomsithi (2012) have investigated the effects of extensive reading instruction integrated with a learner autonomy training strategy framework on development of learner autonomy. The findings from learner autonomy questionnaires have highlighted students' frequent use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies in extensive reading as well as their improved attitudes toward both reading and learner autonomy. Another study by Djiwandono (2018) examined the effects of a blended learning on reading abilities, vocabulary mastery, and collaboration among EFL undergraduate students. The results show that the experimental group gained a higher rate in their reading skills and vocabulary mastery significantly due to their exposure to the reading texts during the online learning sessions. Hence, it can be concluded that the implementation of an extensive reading approach should be promoted in any reading class because it helps students develop reading ability as well as learner autonomy.

Methodology

Participants

The study participants were forty English major students who were assigned to the researcher as an intact group from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in a public university in Suratthani, Thailand. Most of the students' levels of English language proficiency were low intermediate. All of them completed fundamental English courses for General Education which included English Basics (GED1003) and English for Application (GED1004) in the first year. The treatment lasted 14 classes including face-to-face-reading strategy instruction, online reading activities, and extensive reading activities in each class.

Instructional Methods

The instruction combined lessons with three learning tasks: face-to-face reading strategy instruction, online reading activities, and extensive reading activities which were designed based on the instructional framework adapted from the CALLA model (Chamot, 2014) It includes five main stages: 1) preparation, 2) presentation, 3) practice, 4) evaluation, and 5) expansion (See Appendix A).

Face-to-face reading strategy instruction

The participants were explicitly taught reading comprehension strategies and metacognitive strategies for reading comprehension using a reading strategy workbook. The workbook was compiled from 12 chapters adapted from a commercial book titled *Active Skills for Reading 3*, with a primary focus on explicit reading comprehension strategy instruction. The selected reading strategies included previewing and predicting, skimming, scanning, using context to guess meaning, activating background knowledge, identifying main ideas and topics, identifying supporting details, recognizing facts and opinions, making inferences, and drawing conclusions.

Online reading activities

Right after the face-to-face reading strategy instruction, the students were assigned to access the online platform: http://www.mineenglishblog.wordpress.com designed by the instructor. Through this platform, the students were given the opportunity to practice reading comprehension strategies via the online reading activities, materials, assignments, and quizzes, as well as to direct their learning through online discussion, sharing knowledge, and being collaborative with other group members. A direction was given so that the students would be kept on track while enjoying the freedom to learn effectively, independently, and collaboratively. The online activities included three main activities: the in-class online activity, out-of class online activity, and self-evaluation online activity. For in-class online activity, each student was assigned to complete online reading comprehension exercises in class. The instructor monitored students' responses and observed their understanding via Google Doc response sheet. For out-of-class online activity, the students were divided into small groups. They were given a prompt about a topic they had learned in class and were given the choice to search either from the instructor's lists of websites or from their own choices. Then, each group posted their work on Facebook. After that, each student gave comments and feedback regarding the post that they were interested in. For self-evaluation

activity, the students rated their overall comprehension and performance which included their plan to improve for next time. After completing all activities, each student recorded their submission via a checklist provided by the instructor. The checklist was graded in every lesson and students were required to complete at least 80% of in-class online activities.

Extensive reading activities

Apart from doing the in-class online reading activities, the students were offered a collection of E-graded readers to read during 14 weeks of the implementation. To give the students opportunity to improve English reading comprehension across subject areas, approximately 150 informational E-books from different levels from Houghton Muffin Publisher were made available for them to read via Google Drive file sharing. The numbers of words in each E-book ranged from approximately 1,200 words to 2500 words long. The students were offered the following incentives to read as many E-books as possible: Complete 9+ E-books = 9-10 points; Complete 7-8 E-books = 7-8 points; Complete 5-6 E-books = 5-6 points ; Complete 3-4 E-books = 3-4 points; Complete 1-2 E-books = 1-2%; and Complete 0 E-book = 0%, out of the final grade 100 points.

However, the points given also depended on the quality of reading logs they submitted each week. Their reading logs reflected their own reading experiences considering the following questions: 1) what did you read?, 2) how did you feel?, and 3) what did you learn? After the students completed the reading logs, the students voluntarily shared their reading logs with the class and also received guidance from the instructor in writing effective reading logs. Table 1 presents the outline of the instructional methods weekly session.

Table 1: Outline of the instructional methods weekly session.

Period	Time	Instructional based	Activities
1	90	Face-to-face reading strategy instruction	- Learning reading strategies explicitly - Practice reading strategies under teacher guidance
2	90	Online reading activities	- Doing follow-up exercise independently - Practice reading strategies - Sharing ideas in a group - Monitoring comprehension - Receiving teacher and peer comments and feedback - Doing self-evaluation
3	Out of class	Extensive reading activities	- Selecting reading materials to read based on interest - Checking and monitoring their own comprehension - Receiving teacher and peer comments and feedback

Data Collection Instruments

Two main types of data collection instruments were used in this study: 1) the pre- and post-questionnaires of learner autonomy and 2) the learner autonomy interview.

The pre- and post-questionnaires of learner autonomy were administered to determine if the students' learner autonomy had been enhanced after the treatment. There were 12 items in the questionnaire. The items were adapted from the National Capital Language Resource center's (2014) learning strategies questionnaire. They were divided into three main categories: planning ability, monitoring ability, and evaluating ability, which elicited data on the metacognitive behaviors the students developed during independent reading before and after the course. The questionnaire was a 5-point Likert Scale. The participants rated their degree of opinion in a scale of 1 ("very low") to 5 ("very high"). Pre- and post-questionnaire scores were compared using the paired-sample *t*-test. Moreover, the effect size of the mean scores was computed in order to measure the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores according to the sample size (Cohen, 1988) (See Appendix B).

The second instrument was the semi-structured interview. Interviews were conducted with six students with the highest, moderate, and lowest progressive rates on their enhancement of learner autonomy. The items were adapted from Borg and Al-Busaidi' (2012) learner autonomy interview items. The interview consisted of seven questions aiming at gaining in-depth data of how the individual students developed some aspects of learner autonomy throughout this course, and how autonomous characteristics helped them become better readers. The data obtained from the learner autonomy interview protocol was transcribed, coded, and analyzed qualitatively using content analysis to confirm the quantitative data obtained from the leaner autonomy questionnaire (See Appendix C).

Data Collection Procedures

After all the instruments had been developed, the main study was conducted.

The main data collection was carried out in the first semester of the academic year 2017. The total number of the students was 40 including four males and 36 females. The course took 14 weeks covering 12 units which were arranged in topical units. Each class lasted three hours consisting of a 1.5-hour session of face-to-face reading strategy instruction and a 1.5-hour in-class online learning session

At the beginning of the course, all 40 students were given the pre-questionnaire of learner autonomy. After 14 weeks, the post-questionnaire of learner autonomy was administered to all of the students. Then, six students with the highest, the moderate, and the lowest progressive rates of enhancement of learner autonomy were selected for the learner autonomy interview.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the results obtained from the pre-and post-questionnaires of learner autonomy and the interviews. Discussions will also be presented and mainly highlight the key points, such as the highest and the lowest improvement rate of students' learner autonomy.

Overall learner autonomy

Regarding overall learner autonomy, the post-questionnaire mean score of the learner autonomy was higher than the pre-questionnaire mean score. From the maximun score of 5, the pre-questionnaire lowest score was 2, and the highest was 4.17. The post-questionnaire lowest score was 2.67, and the highest was 5. Before the treatment, most students' level of

learner autonomy was considered at a moderate level. After the treatment, the students' level of learner autonomy reached a high level with statistical significance with a large effect size (pre-questionnaire mean score = 3.27; post-questionnaire mean score = 4.08; $p \leq 0.05$; d = 1.57), as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Pre- and post-questionnaire mean scores of learner autonomy

	Total	**Pre-questionnaire**			**Post-questionnaire**			***t*-test**	**Sig.**	***d***
		Mean	S.D.	Level	Mean	S.D.	Level			
Learner autonomy	5	3.27	.552	Moderate	4.08	.474	High	8.20	.000*	1.57

*$p \leq 0.05$

According to Table 2, it could be assumed that the students' overall learner autonomy improved after receiving integration of a blended learning and extensive reading instructional model. As shown by the observed mean scores, the students showed significant improvement in their level of learner autonomy after integration of a blended learning and extensive reading instructional model.

The results, which indicated that a blended learning and extensive reading instructional model enhanced learner autonomy, implied that the application of technology, which, in this case, is the use of an online platform and extensive reading, can be used to promote learner autonomy in reading. As revealed in the present study, the use of online learning and extensive reading along with reading strategy instruction had a significant effect on the students' development of the ability to become independent readers. Such findings are congruent with Gaskins' (1994) explanation that the ultimate goal of reading comprehension instruction is the development of students' reading strategies and the ability to be an independent reader. In this study, the students' learner autonomy in reading was believed to be promoted because of different components of a blended learning and extensive reading instructional model and the opportunity for the students to develop various reading strategies in order to build up learner autonomy in the reading process. This is consistent with the study by Castillo and Bonilla (2014) who have claimed that the reading strategies are very useful to guide learners along the path of autonomy development, especially in terms of decision making and enhancing awareness of their own reading process. In addition, such strategies encourage students to see that they are builders of their own knowledge and reflective thinkers of how to apply the reading strategies before, during, and after their own reading.

Learner Autonomy Categories

The following section presents each category of learner autonomy in reading which included 'the students' ability to plan their own reading,' 'the students' ability to monitor their own reading,' and 'the students' ability to evaluate their own reading.' The pre- and post-questionnaire mean scores of learner autonomy as divided into different categories are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Pre- and post-questionnaire mean scores of learner autonomy categories

	Total	**Pre-questionnaire**			**Post-questionnaire**			***t*-test**	**Sig.**	***d***
		Mean	S.D.	Level	Mean	S.D.	Level			
Students' ability to plan their own reading	5	3.17	.559	Moderate	3.86	.645	High	7.85	.000*	1.14
Students'	5	3.26	.705	Moderate	4.24	.581	Very	6.75	.000*	1.52

	Total	Pre-questionnaire			Post-questionnaire			*t*-test	Sig.	*d*
		Mean	S.D.	Level	Mean	S.D.	Level			
ability to monitor their own reading							high			
Students' ability to evaluate their own reading	5	3.39	.693	Moderate	4.13	.404	High	6.12	.000*	1.30

* $p \leq 0.05$

According to Table 3, the students improved all three categories of learner autonomy in reading after receiving integration of a blended learning and extensive reading instructional model. Considering the observed mean score, all three categories of learner autonomy significantly increased after integration of a blended learning and extensive reading instructional model. Interestingly, the students rated their improvement in 'the ability to monitor their own reading' at a very high level, followed by 'the ability to evaluate their own reading', and 'the ability to plan their own reading', respectively. The following section presents the findings regarding the students' improvement in each category of learner autonomy ranging from the highest to the lowest improvement rate.

Students' improvement of monitoring ability

Regarding 'the students' ability to monitor their own reading,' which was the highest improvement rate, the post-questionnaire mean score was higher than the pre-questionnaire mean score. From the maximum score of 5, the pre-questionnaire lowest score was 1.75, and the highest score was 5. The post-questionnaire lowest score was 3, and the highest was 5. Before the treatment, most students' level of ability to monitor their own reading was moderate. However, after the treatment, 'the students' ability to monitor their own reading' increased to a very high level with statistical significance with a large effect size (pre-questionnaire mean score = 3.26; post-questionnaire mean score = 4.24; $p \leq 0.05$; $d = 1.52$).

The findings from the interviews regarding the monitoring ability showed that during reading, the students were able to check the contents regularly to see if they made sense as well as identify what they did not understand when reading. The findings from the interviews confirmed that the students frequently monitored the reading contents during their own reading process. Some of them reported that they monitored the contents by means of self-questioning in order to clarify the contents when reading independently, as one of them described:

> *"I now know that talking to myself while reading enables me to understand the text better. I talked to myself by trying to understand what the story was about, and what the message that the writer wanted to say."(Student #1)*

Apart from that, some of the students reported that they monitored the reading contents by checking their comprehension with peers during online reading activities, as can be seen from the following excerpts:

"I tried to understand the passage by evaluating my understanding paragraph by paragraph first and checked my comprehension by reading my peers' posts and comments." (Student #8)

"When reading, I thought to myself if it happened this way, what would happen next? From the peers' posts on Facebook, I checked whether my prediction was correct." (Student #10)

The findings indicated that the students improved their ability to monitor their reading when reading independently. The monitoring steps that the students took showed they were checking the content regularly to see if it made sense, identifying what they did not understand, and rating comprehension by reflecting on how much they understood, resulting in their improvement at a very high level. The findings from the interviews were in line with the results from the questionnaire in that the students often monitored the reading contents through self-questioning and peers' posts and comments to see whether they understood the content correctly throughout their reading process.

From the findings, it is implied that, using this instructional model, the responsibility for learning has shifted from the instructor to the students. The roles of the online learning platform transformed not only teaching and learning methodologies used but also broke down traditional boundaries between teaching and learning. This is supported by Benson (2001) and Jonassen (2006), who state that online communication plays a significant role in developing autonomous learners. In this study, asynchronous online communication between the students and peers was reported to be beneficial for the students learning contents and activities. According to Swan (2001), asynchronous communication offers students more time to reflect their own thought, which supports critical thinking and autonomous learning. A study by Ranjit and Amin (2010) also investigated the roles of Malaysian adult learners in asynchronous computer-mediated communication. The findings of the study revealed that learners employed different roles, such as initiators-wrappers, task orienters, social discourse networkers, e-collaborators, and e-mentors in their quest to acquire the knowledge and enhance their learning skills, which is consistent with the findings in this study in that the students used asynchronous online communication to monitor and evaluate their own understanding of the contents and activities. By implementing asynchronous communication as a part of classroom activities, the students are given ample time to obtain information and monitor their own comprehension at a convenient time and pace by means of sharing information through discussion threads.

Students' improvement of evaluating ability

The next improvement rate of learner autonomy was 'the students' ability to evaluate their own reading,' the post-questionnaire mean score was higher than the pre-questionnaire mean score. From a maximum score of 5, the pre-questionnaire lowest score was 1.75, and the highest score was 4.50. The post-questionnaire lowest score was 3, and the highest was 5. Before the treatment, most students' level of ability to evaluate their own reading was moderate. However, after the treatment, 'the students' ability to evaluate their own reading' increased to a high level with statistical significance with a large effect size (pre-questionnaire mean score = 3.39; post-questionnaire mean score = 4.13; $p \leq 0.05$; $d = 1.30$).

The findings from the interviews regarding the evaluating ability showed that at the end of reading, the students were able to make decisions on successful strategies or techniques regarding their reading performance when reading independently. The findings

from the interviews confirmed that the students performed their self-evaluation on their own reading performance, as some of them described:

> *"I usually guessed the meaning from context as much as I could. If I encountered difficulty using this strategy, I used an online dictionary to help me." (Student #2)*

> *"I think I did better than last time. I employed the previewing strategy more often in this course. It gave me an idea of what the text would be about." (Student #5)*

> *"Throughout this course, I evaluated my reading strengths and weaknesses more often. I think I could improve my reading further from my own evaluation." (Student #7)*

The findings indicated that the students improved their ability to evaluate their own reading when reading independently. The evaluating steps that the students took showed they were making decision on the strategies or techniques that help them understand, resulting in their improvement at a high level. The findings from the interviews were congruent with the results from the questionnaire in that the students often evaluated their own reading performance and strategy use through self-evaluation that had been practiced throughout this course.

From the findings, the online learning platform was reported as one of the tools to reflect the students' own reading performance and strategy use. The characteristics of the online platform allow the students to take their time and use their own pace to reflect their own reading performance, which in fact shifts the role of the instructor in evaluating the students' works onto the students' own responsibility. However, Sidhu (2010), who studied Malaysian perspective toward asynchronous communication, reported that the students still needed regular feedback from the instructor about their own performance.

Students' improvement of planning ability

The least improved rate of learner autonomy was 'the students' ability to plan their own reading.' The post-questionnaire mean score was higher than the pre-questionnaire mean score. From a maximum score of 5, the pre-questionnaire lowest score was 2, and the highest score was 4. The post-questionnaire lowest score was 1.5, and the highest was 5. Before the treatment, most students' level of ability to plan their own reading was moderate. However, after the treatment, 'the students' ability to plan their own reading' increased at a high level with statistical significance with a large effect size (pre-questionnaire mean score = 3.17; post-questionnaire mean score = 3.86; $p \leq 0.05$; $d = 1.14$).

The findings from the interviews regarding the planning ability showed that after training, the students were able to make decision about the specific information to look for when reading independently at the beginning of their reading. The findings from the interviews confirmed that the students often planned their reading by determining the reading purpose before they read and selected the reading contents in English to be learned and focused on in order to comprehend the reading contents when reading independently, as some of them described:

> *"I was able to read faster by using guided questions as a guideline to focus on specific information if I was not familiar with the contents. I think I read faster this way because I concentrated more on the contents."(Student #3)*

"Most of the time before reading, I briefly previewed the title and the questions, if any, to get some clues and to decide what to focus on. Sometimes, I got lost reading my favorite book, but from this course I learned that this way helped me stay focused." (Student #12)

From the above excerpts, the students were able to apply the pre-reading strategies in order to read effectively on their own. The strategies included using guided questions and previewing strategy to focus on the contents of the texts during the reading process.

Interestingly, some of the students reported that they were able to make prediction about the contents they were about to read independently. Previewing and predicting strategies were claimed as more useful pre-reading strategies employed by the students, as can be seen from the following excerpts:

"When I got a passage, I now know what to do before reading. I started by previewing the genre, then the title. Similar to reading newspaper, I would look at the news heading to make prediction about the content." (Student #5)

"I used to start reading with no idea. After taking this course, I found that predicting the content by using clues from the title, picture, bolded words, or even scanning for the repeated words before reading enabled me to easily make sense about the content." (Student #7)

According to the findings, the students improved their ability to plan their reading when reading independently. The planning steps that the students showed their improvement was reading with the goal in mind and focusing on the specific information when reading English. The findings from the interviews were in line with the results from the questionnaire in that the students often read with a goal in mind, made decisions about specific information to look for, and focused on the reading contents when reading independently.

The results of this study showed that the students developed planning ability in their reading after the course. They established the objectives of their reading, selected appropriate reading strategies before reading, and controlled their own process of reading. These ability reflected the three basic pedagogical norms to promote learner autonomy proposed by Little (1991), that the instruction which fostered the students' learner autonomy should include learner involvement, learner reflection, and appropriate target language use. In the present study, the students could make decisions and take responsibility for their own learning by, for example, setting their own goals to complete the program successfully, selecting the proper time and environment to read, and selecting appropriate strategies to read effectively. A blended learning and extensive reading integrated instruction allowed the students to not only practice cognitive and metacognitive strategies to achieve the reading goals but also to develop intrinsic motivation to see their own progress and achievement within a technology-enhanced reading environment. This supports the results of a study by Teeler and Gray (2000), who found that the teacher could use the Internet to contribute to the development of students' reading skills because it enhanced the students' motivation to read. In addition, the results of this study has also pointed out that the use of an online platform has a positive effect on the struggling students who lack motivation to read. The students who might have low interaction in classroom could be highly engaged in the reading process once they access the online reading platform and read for themselves. This study also showed that the students practiced the reading strategies voluntarily with their intrinsic motivation to learn outside the classroom setting. The results are consistent with the findings by Ciampa (2012) who has

reported that using e-books increases the students' motivation to read. These characteristics match Dickinson's (1993) standpoint of students who have a certain level of learner autonomy. Therefore, it could be concluded that the students' motivation in reading could be promoted using an online platform that includes the online activities and extensive reading activities, which contributes to the development of learner autonomy.

To sum up, most students significantly improved their learner autonomy in reading after studying in an integrated blended learning and extensive reading instructional model. All three categories of learner autonomy in reading significantly improved after the course. The results were confirmed by the qualitative data developed from the interviews. Therefore, based on the overall results of learner autonomy questionnaire and the findings from the learner autonomy interviews, it could be concluded that integration of a blended learning and extensive reading instructional model is proven effective in enhancing learner autonomy of EFL undergraduate students.

Conclusions

This study investigated the effects of integration of a blended learning and extensive reading instructional model on learner autonomy of EFL undergraduate students. The results of the post-questionnaire mean scores indicated that the students' learner autonomy was statistically higher than the post-questionnaire mean score of learner autonomy after a 14-week course that integrated a blended learning and extensive reading instruction. The post-questionnaire mean scores of learner autonomy categories including planning, monitoring, and evaluating ability were statistically significantly different from the pre-questionnaire mean scores. The ability that had the highest mean score was monitoring ability, while the ability that had the lowest mean score was planning ability. All three categories of learner autonomy for reading significantly improved after integration of a blended learning and extensive reading instructional model. The results were confirmed with the qualitative data described. The findings in this study showed that integration of a blended learning and extensive reading instructional model enhanced the students' learner autonomy. The students' learner autonomy improved in all three categories including the students' ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own reading. Thus, language instructors and institutions are suggested to integrate a blended learning and extensive reading instructional model in their instruction in order to equip the students with the right learning tools for their enhancement of the ability to manage their own reading and learning.

Implications

Several classroom implications drawn from the findings of the study are proposed as follows:

First, instructors and institutions need to actively improve students' ability to manage ones' own reading by means of explicit reading strategy instruction supplemented by the practice in metacognitive reading strategy activities. In this study, it is claimed that once the students actively involved in their own reading process, they became self-regulated readers who were able to plan their reading contents and activities, monitor their comprehension, and evaluate their comprehension and performance. Research further supports the claim that such abilities facilitate students' reading comprehension and play a powerful role in the learning process by assisting students to be independent and strategic readers. Therefore, it is recommended that instructors should create various class experiences to increase the growth of metacognitive skills, for example, designing metacognitive reading activities for students to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own reading comprehension, modeling and training the

strategies explicitly during classroom period, and observing students when they apply the strategies with the new tasks.

Second, online extensive reading activities could be offered as part of a classroom reading instruction. In this study, the students claimed that extensive reading activities increased the student's language inputs, increased vocabulary range, and reinforced the reading skills which that lead to their reading comprehension and learner autonomy. In this instruction, the instructor instructed the students to participate in the blended learning activities and facilitated their learning using both online platform and extensive reading. The students, hence, explored the new learning resources online and were able to direct their own learning.

Third, instructors should also allow the students to use social network applications, both synchronous and asynchronous tools to interact with the instructors and their friends in order to create meaningful learning environment. The instructor should also be involved in the blended learning by giving guidance and support to the students in need. For example, when the students encounter problems and need online support, they could use manual or ask for assistance. Another way to provide appropriate support is to train the students to use the online platform effectively before the beginning of the instruction. So, the students will be familiar with the use of online platform, and online extensive reading activities.

Recommendations for Future Research

As the result of this study suggested that the use of blended learning and extensive reading contributed to the students' reading comprehension and learner autonomy, more qualitative investigation is needed into the cognitive and metacognitive processes that the students employ when they interact with the online platform and the online extensive reading activities. Further studies should also emphasize how cognitive and metacognitive enhance the students' development of learner autonomy and reading ability.

In addition, this study shed light on the implementation of an extensive reading program in an EFL higher education classroom setting. It is recommended that there should be more time for the longitudinal studies to examine the effect of the integration of a blended learning and extensive reading instructional model on different aspects of learner autonomy, such as the cognitive component, affective and motivational components, and the social component. Furthermore, the students' learner autonomy should be further investigated in the aspects of the ongoing development of their learner autonomy over time. In this study, it may not possible to assess all aspects of students' learner autonomy. Therefore, it is recommended for future research to employ different assessment tools or methods, for example, self-assessment of both language and learning to investigate the changes in students' performance and learner autonomy over time.

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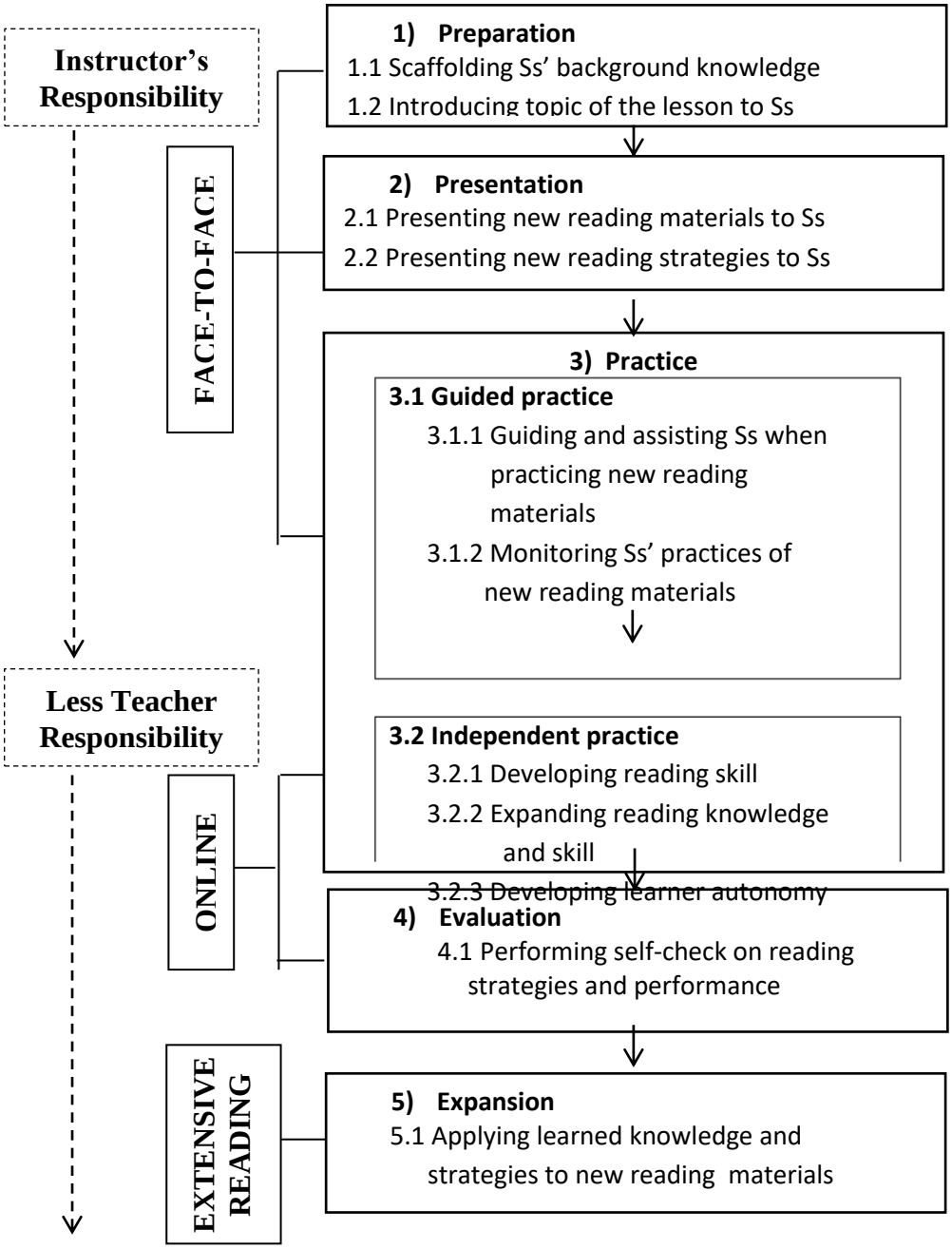
Appendix A
The instructional framework adapted from the CALLA (Chamot, 2014)



The Instructional Framework Adapted from the CALLA (Chamot, 2014)

Appendix B
Learner Autonomy Questionnaire
แบบสอบถามการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเอง

Instruction

The questionnaire was constructed to investigate students' learner autonomy. Please rate each item according to the fact applied to you. Total information confidently will be assured. Besides, your answers will not have any effect on your grades.

คำชี้แจง

แบบทดสอบชุดนี้จัดทำขึ้นเพื่อสำรวจการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเองของนักศึกษา ขอให้นักศึกษาตอบแบบสอบถามตามข้อมูลที่เป็นจริง ข้อมูลทั้งหมดจะถือเป็นความลับไม่เปิดเผยเป็นรายบุคคล และจะไม่มีผลกระทบใดๆ ต่อคะแนนวิชาภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษา

Name (ชื่อ):…….. Student ID (เลขประจำตัว)……..
Age (อายุ)……years Gender (เพศ) ….Male (ชาย)….Female (หญิง)

Directions: Making a tick (✔) under the number for each of the following items.
คำแนะนำ: กรุณาตอบว่าท่านเห็นด้วยกับข้อความข้างล่างมากน้อยเพียงใด โดยทำเครื่องหมาย (✔) ในช่องที่มีความหมายดังต่อไปนี้

5 = Very high (มากที่สุด)
4 = High (มาก)
3 = Moderate (ปานกลาง)
2 = Low (น้อย)
1 = Very low (น้อยมาก)

		1	2	3	4	5
	Before reading ก่อนอ่าน					
1.	I can set my own reading goal. ฉันสามารถกำหนดเป้าหมายในการอ่านของฉัน					
2.	I can read with the goal in mind. ฉันสามารถอ่านตามเป้าหมายที่ตั้งไว้					
3.	I can decide on specific information to look for. ฉันสามารถเลือกข้อมูลเฉพาะที่ต้องการอ่าน					
4.	I can focus on specific information when I read. ฉันสามารถมุ่งเน้นไปที่ข้อมูลเฉพาะเมื่อฉันอ่าน					
	While reading ขณะอ่าน					
5.	I can regularly check whether the content is making sense to me. ฉันสามารถตรวจสอบอย่างสม่ำเสมอว่าฉันเข้าใจเนื้อหาหรือไม่					
6.	I can identify what I don't understand in the reading. ฉันสามารถระบุสิ่งที่ฉันไม่เข้าในในการอ่าน					
7.	I can ask myself a question when I don't understand the reading.					

	ฉันสามารถถามคำถามตนเองเมื่อฉันไม่เข้าใจในการอ่าน					
8.	I can rate my comprehension by reflecting on how much I understand what I read. ฉันสามารถประเมินความเข้าใจของฉันโดยการสะท้อนคิดว่าฉันเข้าใจสิ่งที่ฉันอ่านมากแค่ไหน					
	After reading					
9.	I can decide whether the strategies or technique I used help me understand. ฉันสามารถตัดสินได้ว่ากลวิธีหรือเทคนิคการอ่านต่างๆ ที่ฉันใช้ ช่วยทำให้ฉันเข้าใจหรือไม่					
10.	I can think of other strategies that could help reading. ฉันสามารถนึกถึงกลวิธีอื่นๆ ที่จะช่วยในการอ่าน					
11.	I can check whether I accomplished my goal for reading. ฉันสามารถตรวจสอบว่าฉันบรรลุเป้าหมายในการอ่านหรือไม่					
12.	I can assess how well I have accomplished the reading task. ฉันสามารถประเมินได้ว่าฉันทำได้ดีแค่ไหนในงานอ่าน					

Suggestion ข้อเสนอแนะ

Appendix C
Learner Autonomy Interview Protocol
แบบสัมภาษณ์การเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเอง

1. In a few words, how would you describe the characteristics of an autonomous language learner? อะไรคือลักษณะสำคัญของผู้เรียนที่สามารถเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเอง

2. To what extent do you think this course improve learner autonomy? and how? นักศึกษาคิดว่าวิชานี้ช่วยส่งเสริมการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเองระดับไหน อย่างไร

3. What are some activities that promote learner autonomy? and how? กิจกรรมที่ช่วยส่งเสริมการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเองคืออะไร อย่างไร
4. What do you usually do before reading independently? ก่อนเริ่มอ่านด้วยตนเอง นักศึกษามักจะทำสิ่งใดก่อน

5. Have you encountered any problems while reading independently? How do you solve those problems? ขณะอ่านด้วยตนเอง นักศึกษาพบปัญหาอะไรบ้างและแก้ไขปัญหาเหล่านั้นอย่างไร

6. After reading independently, do you evaluate yourselves? and How? หลังจากอ่านด้วยตนเองเสร็จเรียบร้อยแล้ว นักศึกษาได้ประเมินตนเองหรือไม่ อย่างไร

7. Do you think becoming autonomous learner help you read better? How?
นักศึกษาคิดว่าการเป็นผู้เรียนที่สามารถเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเองช่วยทำให้นักศึกษาอ่านได้ดีขึ้นหรือไม่ อย่างไร