รายงานการวิจัย

เรื่อง

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ด้วยตนเอง: กรณีศึกษามหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏกลุ่มภาคตะวันออกเฉียงเหนือ

Teacher Perceptions, Practices, and Challenges of Learner Autonomy:

A Case Study of Northeastern Thailand Rajabhat Universities

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บทคัดย่อ

ในการเรียนรู้ในศตวรรษที่ 21 ครูถูกลดบทบาทลง และผู้เรียนถูกคาดหวังให้มีอิสระมากขึ้นในการตั้งจุดมุ่งหมาย รูปแบบ การวัดประเมินผล การเลือกกลยุทธ์ในการเรียน และ อื่น ๆ กล่าวคือการสร้างการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษแบบเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเอง (Learner Autonomy in Language Learning) เป็นเรื่องที่ไม่อาจเลี่ยงได้ในการจัดการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษ อย่างไรก็ตามการสร้างการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษแบบเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเองไม่ใช่เรื่องง่ายเนื่องจากจะต้องคำนึงถึงองค์ประกอบที่ซับซ้อนหลายประการ

วัตถุประสงค์ของงานวิจัยชิ้นนี้ได้แก่ 1) เพื่อศึกษาความเข้าใจของอาจารย์ภาษาอังกฤษในมหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏภาคตะวันออกเฉียงเหนือเกี่ยวกับการจัดการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษแบบเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเอง 2) เพื่อศึกษาแนวทางปฏิบัติของอาจารย์ภาษาอังกฤษในมหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏภาคตะวันออกเฉียงเหนือเกี่ยวกับการจัดการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษแบบเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเอง และ 3) เพื่อศึกษาอุปสรรคของอาจารย์ภาษาอังกฤษในมหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏภาคตะวันออกเฉียงเหนือเกี่ยวกับการจัดการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษแบบเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเอง

กลุ่มตัวอย่างประกอบด้วยอาจารย์ภาษาอังกฤษในมหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏภาคะวันออกเฉียงเหนือ จำนวน 84 คน ได้มาจากการสุ่มแบบเฉพาะเจาะจง (purposive sampling) เครื่องมือวิจัยได้แก่ แบบสอบถาม และแบบสัมภาษณ์ วิเคราะห์ข้อมูลโดยใช้ ค่าเฉลี่ย ส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน และ การวิเคราะห์เชิงพรรณา

      ผลของการวิจัยพบว่าอาจารย์ภาษาอังกฤษในมหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏภาคตะวันออกเฉียงเหนือมีความเข้าใจแนวคิดของการจัดการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษแบบเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเอง อย่างไรก็ตามอาจารย์ฯ ไม่สามารถจัดการเรียนการสอนให้สอดคล้องกับแนวคิดของการจัดการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษแบบเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเองได้ เนื่องจากพบปัญหาในระบบการจัดการศึกษาของประเทศไทย

Research Title: Teacher Perceptions, Practices, and Challenges of Learner Autonomy: A Case Study of Northeastern Thailand Rajabhat Universities

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ABSTRACT

In the new trend of learning in the 21st century, teachers becomes less empowered in the classrooms. Instead, learners are expected to be more independent about learning goals, styles, evaluations, strategies etc. The idea of Lerner autonomy is an inevitable principle in language learning management. However, establishing learner autonomy is not an easy task since complicated components have to be involved.

The current study aimed to investigate 1) northeastern Thailand Rajabhat University instructors' perceptions of promoting learner autonomy, 2) the instructors' practices in promoting learner autonomy, and 3) the instructors' challenges in promoting learner autonomy.

The participants were 84 instructors teaching in northeastern Thailand Rajabhat Universities selected by purposive sampling. The research instruments were a questionnaire and an interview session. The data were analyzed by mean score, standard deviation, and descriptive analysis.

The results of the study showed that even though the instructors understood concept of learner autonomy, they only partially felt that they supported learner autonomy in their

classes as the result of difficulties in systematic structure of Thai education and leaners themselves.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of figures

Chapter I

Introduction

1. Background and Rationales

In the new trend of learning in the 21st century, teachers become less empowered in the classrooms (Gua, 2014). Instead, learners are expected to be more independent about learning goals, styles, evaluations, strategies, etc. The idea of learner autonomy (LA) has become an ideal learning setting for decades as it is believed to be the supportive environment to learning and acquisition of knowledge (Hui, 2010)

In language classrooms, scholars have been encouraged instructors to pay more attention to the promotion of learner autonomy to their classrooms (Benson and Voller, 1997; Littlewood, 1996, 1999; Palfreyman, 2003). For instance, Littlewood (1996, 1999) claimed that active involvement of learners should be promoted by enabling autonomous learning that allows learners to take roles that normally belong to teachers such as setting learning objectives, selecting learning materials, and assessing learning progress. Moreover, Palfreyman (2003) also portrayed benefits of LA in the sociological point of view. According to the researcher, a classroom with a learner autonomy environment could improve the quality of language learning, support democracy and human rights, and promote life-long learning.

Nevertheless, learner autonomy could not be promoted without the role of teachers. Benson (2011) claimed that "in order to foster learner autonomy, teachers themselves must

display a degree of autonomy in their approaches to teaching and learning" (p.185). Teacher autonomy does not mean that learners completely control the class; however, teachers should act as the facilitators in order to promote a democratic learning community (Little, 2004). Therefore, it is important for teachers to know their role in the classes since it is impossible to promote LA with the absence of teacher autonomy.

However, teacher autonomy could not simply be promoted in the EFL context especially in such a country with culture of seniority dominance. To explain, instructors, respected as the senior leader of classes, dictate all the processes of learning without negotiation and agreement of learners who also are pleased to be involved in the class as passive recipients doing whatever written in the curriculum (Keyuravong & Maneekhao, 2006). Even though the government attempts to change teacher dominance in Thai classrooms have been put since the mid-90s, the teacher-centered teaching approach still remains a problem in the Thai EFL context (Naruemon, 2013). Although it is not easy to change the behaviors of Thais in teaching and learning, understanding current situation might lead to the relief of the problems and promotion of learner autonomy.

The aims of the current study were to look into the current situation of learner autonomy promotion in Thailand. The scope of the study was set at northeastern Thailand Rajabhat University –where instructors seem to be in the more crucial situation than in other contexts in the county. To explain, due to the decreasing number of students entering the university system, Rajabhat universities- the universities that are developed from teacher schools, are forced to recruit most students as possible in order to financially survive. Accompanying with the fact that Rajabhat universities are not popular for Thai high school

students, the university could mainly recruit students who are not able to enter the famous universities across the country (Sorat, 2018). Therefore, Many of Rajabhat university students are likely to be at low English proficiency and less autonomous in Learning.

Taking this perspective, it seems that investigation of the situation where problems are found could be an ideal idea to start with in order to promote a more learning autonomy environment. The current study aimed to look into the perception of Northeastern Thailand Rajahbat University instructors on learner autonomy, their practices in promoting learner autonomy, and the difficulties they face in attempt to promote learner autonomy. The results of the study might shed light on the understanding of the problems and eventually lead to the right solutions that could bring about learner autonomy as the learning environment of classes in Rajabhat universities.

2. Purposes of the study

1. To investigate northeastern Thailand Rajabhat University instructors' perceptions of promoting learner autonomy,

2. To investigate the northeastern Thailand Rajabhat University instructors' practices in promoting learner autonomy

3. To investigate the northeastern Thailand Rajabhat University instructors' challenges in promoting learner autonomy

3. Research Questions

1. What are northeastern Thailand Rajabhat University instructors' perceptions of promoting learner autonomy?

2. What are northeastern Thailand Rajabhat University instructors' practices in promoting learner autonomy?

3. What are northeastern Thailand Rajabhat University instructors' challenges in promoting learner autonomy?

4.Significance of the study

Because of the importance of learner autonomy in the learning of the 21st century, scholars have put attempts to generate learner autonomy environment to language classrooms. In Thailand, although the idea of children-centered classrooms has been promoted for decades, it seems that the situation of active teachers and passive learners could not be solved easily. In order to promote learner autonomy, the understanding of teacher perceptions could shed light on its success. The previous studies showed the different results of teachers' perceptions, practices, and challenges in promoting learner autonomy. The current study aimed to investigate the similar aspects of learner autonomy in Rajabhat universities in northeastern Thailand where the instructors face the different types of learners in order to provide information for promoting learning autonomy in the future.

5. Definitions of Terms

1. Learner Autonomy

Learner autonomy refers to language classroom environments that encourage students to take charge of their own learning.

2. Teachers' Perception

Teacher perception refers to Northeastern Thai Rajabhat University teachers' understanding and attitudes toward learner autonomy.

3. Teachers' Practice

Teacher practice refers to Northeastern Thai Rajabhat University teachers' attempt to establish learner autonomy in their language classrooms.

4. Teachers' challenges

Teacher challenge refers to Northeastern Thai Rajabhat University teachers' difficulties faced in attempts to promote learner autonomy in their language classrooms.

Chapter II

Literature Review

The purposes of the current study were to investigate 1) northeastern Thailand Rajabhat University instructors' perceptions of promoting learner autonomy, 2) the instructors' practices in promoting learner autonomy, and 3) the instructors' challenges in promoting learner autonomy. In this chapter, related principles and studies were reviewed to illustrate how teachers' perceptions, practices, and challenges affect learner autonomy.

1. Learner Autonomy

Autonomous language learning has been an issues in communication studies since the historical area. Still, the idea of encourage learners to be autonomous learners was just paid attention few decades ago. According to Holec (1981), learner autonomy could be defined as the learning environment that encourage learners to take charge their own learning. Only the 1960s, the term learner autonomy had become the concerns of scholars in language education as it could illustrate a classroom environment in terms of its characteristics of social changes, psychology, and even politics (Gremmo and Riley, 1995). With this principle, the scholars' interests were paid to the idea to contribute a classroom where learners can be instructed in ideal social, physiological, and politic environments. Moreover, such terms as participatory citizenship, life-long learning, and self- development were considered to be a part of language classrooms. The learner autonomy was also generated by the combination of these terms. The reasons behind the rise of learner autonomy in education and language learning area could be illustrated by various aspects. Firstly, the emergence of technology

made learners lives more comfortable especially in learning. Therefore, they have more choices than receiving lectures in the classrooms. In addition, the changing society across the globe which is a result of globalization made it undesirable to be strictly told to do school tasks. Therefore, classes in the 21st century need to provide more freedom to learners as it could be more effective to contribute the terms that were mentioned before in language classrooms.

2. History of Learner Autonomy

As mentioned earlier, the idea of learner autonomy emerged in the 60s to 70s. According to Benson (2011), educational institutions in Europe gained more independence since they were set free from external control. The ideas of such philosophers as Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and John Mill (1806-1873) who supported free will as the basis of a working society was applied to the classroom setting. According to the philosopher individuals' strive for individual freedom in searching the best way for executing tasks should be supported as people are too different to be told to do the same sets of tasks. Encouraging automaticity would let them to apply their own methods doing things with confidence, happiness, and motivation. This philosophy rooted itself into the core principle of learner autonomy.

Moreover, there were also educators involving in the establishment of learner autonomy in classroom setting. For example, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78) applied the idea of Kant and Mill which emphasized innate goodness and abilities of individuals to be the core component of classroom environment. However, Rousseau focused more on natural, authentic phenomena, and learners' responsibility for learning. In detail, what are brought into

the classrooms should be the real tasks students could encounter in real life. Moreover, they should take responsibility to manage the classes. Similarly, John Dewey (1859-1952) also support the ideas of using authentic tasks in classrooms. For Dewey, learners should be trained with authentic environments and problem-solving skills. Pragmatist theory was the main principle applied in the classrooms as Dewey believes in learning while learners performing authentic tasks.

In Political perspectives, scholars also place importance into learner autonomy. Paolo Freire (1921-97) indicated that leaners should be instructed to read the words prior to read the texts. To exemplified, literacy would not be enough if learners lack critical thinking. All learners should be treated equally and individual preferences should also be the choice of curriculum. Ivan illich was another educational thinker who criticized the idea of national wide educational system. The author pointed that central curriculum invented by government would not be necessary of people. The author believed that the universal curriculum is a tool governments use to control their people. It prevents learners from thinking critically and from developing their own way of problem solving skills. Therefore, learner autonomy was supported by these scholars as they thought it could contribute more freedom to learners, and it would liberate them eventually.

In psychological point of view, learner autonomy is described as the result of changes in behaviors. For example, Carl Rogers, changes in behaviors are accounts of individual experiences. Therefore, when people learn things and change their behavioral responses toward things, they have rely on their individual experiences. From this point of view, learner

autonomy would contribute to better behavior changes. Lev Vygosky suggested that learner autonomy is a key factor leading to success in learning according to his constructivism theory.

In conclusion, history of learner autonomy lies in the various aspects of sciences. Enable learners to be autonomous have been discussed throughout times in both educational, political, and psychological areas. It could be implied that the idea of leaner autonomy is accumulated and established to be a promising idea to contribute learner development in language classrooms.

3. Definitions of Learner Autonomy

As mentioned earlier, the term learner autonomy could be taken into the consideration by many aspects. Therefore, definitions have been given to defy the term and they vary and depend on perspectives.

The most popular and simple definition was given in the 80s. Holec (1981) indicated that it is the learning environment that encourages "ability to take charge of ones' own learning" (p.193). The broad definition covers pre class activity involving responsibility in selecting class activity, learning method, and evaluation. The learners need to be put in the meaningful learning environment. Independence and learner empowerment are the keys of the principle.

Nunan (1997) presented five principles in promoting learner autonomy including raising awareness of learners, involving in goal setting, intervening in goal modification according to learner needs, creating own learning materials, and moving beyond their own role- from learners to facilitators for others.

Benson (2001) insisted that self-management and sense of responsibility in learning process are the main components of autonomy. Moreover, process of learning management, cognitive process, and learning content should belong to learners in order to promote learning autonomy.

White (2003) added that sustainable collaboration of learning experiences between learners and instructors could be managed with learners' responsibility and control of learning process.

To sum up, learner autonomy could be promoted by learners' chances in decision making, independence of learners to instructors, psychology of learning (e.g., motivation and confidence), and level of autonomy (awareness, involvement, goal setting, connection between classes and real world).

4. Benefits of Learner Autonomy in Language Classrooms

Considering its definition and how it would be executed in the language classroom, leaner autonomy could be beneficial for the setting in both theoretical and practical aspects. First, learner autonomy is an ideal learning environment for learners in terms of its principle. According to Holec (1981), leaners are the side that should take responsibility in managing their learning in the processes of curriculum design, learning activities, and evaluation. This could be an advantage for language learning. According to Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005), language learners with individual differences usually pass through the different paths of learning. They have different language proficiencies, aptitudes, learning styles, and learning strategies, and none of them could be used as the indication of successful language learning.

Individuals should apply what they have in order to learn a language. Therefore, providing independence for learners would be a promising idea in language learning.

Moreover, learner autonomy could contribute liberal atmosphere to language classrooms. Learner autonomy was developed from the idea that all learners are equal. They should be empowered to design what they learn and decide their own futures. In language learning, learners should be encouraged to think and criticize what they are instructed (Freire, 1972). In that way, they would develop their critical mind which is important for the comprehension the world and language rules.

In addition, learner autonomy also support language class management. Language is a skill that need practical experiences in order to acquire (Yule, 1996). Class activities also take times in all skills. For example, in writing, providing feedbacks for a composition might take 10 minutes in total. Providing feedbacks for a whole class of 30 students might consumes all minutes of classes. Enabling leaner autonomy and autonomous leaners could help instructors to handle classes in less tiresome manners. According to Little (2004), leaners in the learner autonomy environment could rely on themselves in learning. In the case of writing feedback, techniques that require leaners' self-responsibility like peer feedback, error logs, and indirect feedback would be more practicable.

5. Teacher Role in Promoting Learner Autonomy

As mentioned before, learner autonomy could not be promoted without teacher autonomy. Little (2004) indicated that teachers need to aware of learner autonomy in all processes of their instructions. Scholars have presented ideas of how teachers should act in

order to promote learner autonomy. For example, Knowles (1975) indicated that teachers should act as facilitators, helpers and consultants for learners instead of class dictators who take control all processes of classes. Nunan (1997) urged that active participation, monitoring, consultation, and guidance should be main responsibilities of teachers in classrooms with learner autonomy. In addition, learning strategies instruction should be one of the main responsibilities for teachers as it supports learner autonomy (Yang, 1998). Moreover, Xu & Xu (2004) indicated that psychological issues are also important for promoting learner autonomy, therefore; the role of teachers should be encouragers of learner motivation and confidence in learning with autonomy environment.

6. Learner Autonomy in Formal Classroom Setting

Although the idea of learner autonomy seems to be a learnable environment for students and workable setting for teachers, it might not be simply established in formal classroom setting. The idea to let students take charge of their own learning might not go along with the regulation of educational system in many countries. This could be illustrated by various examples happening around the globe.

Firstly, the greatest obstacle of implementing learner autonomy environment is the issue of learner independence. According to the Holec (1981), leaners' should fully take charge of their own learning and the teachers should be facilitators who support learners to achieve their goal. However, the idea is not practical in real situation. For example in Thailand, university instructors are regulated to submit lesson plans before the semester starts. At that

time leaners are on vacation; therefore, it is difficult to design the lesson plans with the participation of learners let alone their full responsibility of them.

Secondly, lesson plans and textbook are regulated to be teachers' burden. In Thailand, in order to get promote in terms of academic ranks, university instructors are expected to create academic work which include textbooks. The textbooks are evaluated according to the principles used to create it by the committees. Consequently, they would pay attention on the creation of textbook and willing to create their own while ignore the idea to let students choose learning materials themselves.

Thirdly, the principle of learner autonomy seems to be set on liberalism with the idea that people were born with innate goodness, and they should have freedom to choose what they need in order to learn effectively. However, it might be doubtful in practices. In real life, many learners prefer GPAs over knowledge. When they are allowed to take charge on their learning, they might choose the easiest content in order to get a good grade meanwhile the selected contents might not help develop their skills.

In conclusion, it might not be easy to establish learner autonomy in formal education system where strict rules are regulated. However, it is still possible to support leaner autonomy to the context. Understanding of current situation could hint the way to change the learning environment to Thai language classrooms.

7. Promoting Leaner Autonomy in Language classrooms

Leaner autonomy is an ideal learning environment for language learning although it is not simply established. Factors need to be considered in order to generating the learning atmosphere to the context. First, curriculum designers should place importance to choices of learning. According to Cotterall (2000), choice is the key of learner autonomy, and it should be given to leaners in the curriculum design process. The learners have all rights to design what they are going to learn in a course. When this circumstance is supported, learners could remain their sense of responsibility in their own learning (Lewis & Reinders, 2008).

Another important aspect of learning autonomy is goals and needs. Not only having freedom in learning, leaners should set the clear goals and needs before choosing learning methods. Negotiation between learners and course designers in designing a curriculum is the key to bring about success in class management (Crabbe, 1993). Goals should be set according to needs of learners, and they should be a results of a reasonable discussion between the two parties.

In addition to the two components, teachers' support is another key factor in promoting language learning. Learner autonomy could not be promoted without teacher autonomy. Little (2004) indicated that teachers need to adapt themselves to learning in the new era. Students are no longer their listeners, and they should not describe themselves lecturers. On the other hand, they should be supporters who could felicitate their learners to apply the learning methods they choose to be as effective as possible.

In terms of learners, what should not be ignored in promoting learner autonomy is learners' metacognitive skills. According to Cohen and Macaro (2007), metacognitive skill refer to an ability to take control of one's own learning. To exemplify, leaners should understand their learning techniques, principles, and end products in order to be successful in learning. Leaner autonomy is an environment that leaners have freedom to choose learning methods. Therefore, they have to use them with understanding otherwise the methods would not help them to achieve their goals of learning.

Emotional Climate also plays an important role in supporting learner autonomy. When being given more power in the classes, learners also need to adapt in the new learning environment. Teachers as a supporter of learner autonomy should create an atmosphere making students feel comfortable and encouraged to except the changes. Teachers should express trust and appreciation in learners' ability in order to establish such an environment (Kohenen, 1992).

The last component leading to success in promoting learner autonomy is Motivation. According to Spratt et al. (2002) learners' intrinsic motivation should be enhanced in order to making them willing to take responsibility of their own learning. For example, they should educate learners to understand the importance of language skills that they are learning in the real uses of language.

8. Key Discussions in Promoting Learner Autonomy

At this point, learner autonomy could be discussed as a principle that is theoretically ideal for language classrooms, but it is difficult to be practically implemented into the formal

setting of education. However, it is to completely hopeless to settle leaner autonomy in Thai EFL context. Understanding of the situation might be step to success in promoting learner autonomy. Teachers' perceptions, practices, and challenges could be taken into the consideration in order to comprehend the real problems in the Thai EFL context.

Perception of teachers toward language teaching principle should be the first aspect taken into the consideration. Kane and Mallon (2006), perception is understanding and opinions on principles. Understanding perception of teachers would illustrate to what extend they want to apply a principle in their teaching. Likewise, perception of teachers toward learner autonomy would give examples of how teachers understand the principle and degree of possibility of success in promoting learner autonomy.

Apart from teacher perception toward learner autonomy, believes of what are practiced in the real situation would also illustrate the successful rate of learner autonomy promoting. Kane and Mallon (2006) indicated that seeing a picture of how teachers believe their practices on a principle could determine their understanding of the principle and possibility of the principle success. In learner autonomy promoting, teachers' believes on how they manage their classes to be autonomous would also show the needs and problems in learner autonomy promoting in their context.

In addition, understanding challenges in an educational principle implementation would also lead to the practical comprehension. In learner autonomy promoting, understand difficulties faced by teachers would make it clearer to understand the current situation of the context. Especially in formal language classroom setting in Rajabhat universities where

teachers have to follow strict rules and face diverse leaners, knowing their challenges in promoting learner autonomy might help solve their problems in the future.

9. Related studies

Several studies have been conducted to investigate EFL instructors' perceptions on managing classrooms with learner autonomy (Camilleri, 1999; Chan, 2003; Borg and Al-Busaidi, 2012; Shahsavari, 2014; Duong, 2014; Doğan & Mirici, 2017). The results of the study reveal different perceptions of teachers toward learner autonomy.

The study of Chan (2003) indicated that instructors in Hong Kong believed that their learners have right to study in the learner autonomy setting. However, the restriction of education policy forced teachers to take control the learning processes. Moreover, they believed that teaching methodological decision should belong to teachers.

Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) studied 61 Oman instructors' perception on learner autonomy and found that teachers believed in theoretical benefits of learner autonomy, however; they were in doubt in feasibility of the method.

Balçıkanlı (2010) conducted a study with 112 student teachers in Gazi University in Turkey in order to identify their perceptions of autonomy. The data were obtained by using questionnaire and conducted interviews. The results of the study indicated that the participants favored learner autonomy in their classrooms, and they believed students should be activated to make more decisions on their learning. More importantly, the students should be involved in the decisions making related to course objective, classroom management, tasks, and learning materials.

Farahi (2015) studied teachers and students' perception toward learner autonomy in Cyprus. 69 students and 11 instructors took part in the survey study. They took a set of questionnaire that was set separately for teachers and students. They also took the interview related to their opinions and understanding on learner autonomy. The results of the study indicated that both teachers and students thought that leaner autonomy was a great idea in language classroom management. However, the principle was not yet believed to be fully feasible.

Al Asmari (2013) studied perceptions of 60 EFL students at in Saudi Arabia. The main objective of the project was to investigate the participants' beliefs as to what extent students should be involved in decisions regarding their own learning. The data were collected by a set of questionnaire. The result of the study indicated that the participants who were English teacher students lacked experience and knowledge on how to be more independent learners. However, they showed positive attitude toward learner autonomy and ready to prepare applying the principle in their future classes.

Ikonen (2013) studied students' perception toward learner autonomy promotion in Finland. 167 ESL students were selected in study. The data were obtained by a set of questionnaire aiming to investigate whether educational system in their country support learner autonomy or not. The result of the study indicated that the participants were satisfied by the learner autonomy promotion in their country.

In Thailand, Doung (2014) studied EFL teachers' perception on learner autonomy with the majority of Thai participants. The result of the study showed that although the instructors

seemed to understand the concept of learner autonomy, they found it was very difficult to implement the principle in their classes.

In conclusion, because of the importance of learner autonomy in the learning of 21st century, scholars have put attempts to generate leaner autonomy environment to language classrooms. In Thailand, although the idea of children-centered classrooms has been promote for decades, it seems that the situation of active teachers and passive learners could not be solved easily. In order to promote learner autonomy, the understanding of teacher perceptions could shed the light on its success. The previous studies showed the different results of teachers' perceptions, practices and challenges in promoting learner autonomy. The current study aimed to investigate the similar aspects of learner autonomy in Rajabhat universities in northeastern Thailand where the instructors face the different types of learners in order to provide information for promoting learning autonomy in the future.

Chapter III

Researcher Methodology

In this chapter, the focus of discussion is on the processes of research methods. The research design, participants, data collection, and data analysis are discussed in the chapter in order to illustrate the methodology of the research study.

1. Research Design

The study was conduct in a survey design. The research design is normally used to study peoples' opinions, expectations, perceptions, beliefs, needs, etc. The survey design was selected to be the main construction of the study because of its capability in showing opinions of a great number of people. The scope of area was set to investigate perceptions, practices, and challenges of the population of English teachers in 11 Rajabhat Universities in Northeastern region of Thailand. Therefore, it might be more comfortable to employ the survey design as it could reach more participants in the data collection.

2. Participants

The participants were 84 instructors teaching in 5 Northeastern Thailand Rajabhat universities and selected by purposive sampling method. The participants had more than 1 year teaching experience and hold at least master degree in the fields related to English. All the participants were treated anonymously.

3. Data Collection

3.1 Research instruments

3.1.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire in the study was adopted from Doung (2014) which was found internal reliability of Cronbach's alpha at .77. The questionnaire consists of three parts which are background information, instructors' perception of learner autonomy with 13 question items and instructors' activities that support learner autonomy including 8 question items. The questionnaire aimed to investigate instructors' perception and practice of learner autonomy in terms of decision making, independence of learners, psychology of learning, and level of autonomy. In order to check understanding of autonomy concept, false concepts of learner independence were added to the questionnaire. Moreover, 5 participants randomly selected from each university were interviewed with the purpose to investigate challenge of promoting learner autonomy. The questionnaire could be seen in the Appendix A.

3.1.2 Interview

The interview was designed in a structured interview form. The questions were designed to figure out participants' difficulties in promoting learner autonomy in terms of decision making, independence of learners, and psychology of learning. 1 participants from each university was chosen to take part in the interview. The data from the interview was used to answer the third research question.

3.2 Data collection

The data were collected in August 2017 using the questionnaire and the interview. The questionnaire was send handily and online. The participants have the change to interrogate the researcher if they are not clear with the questions. 5 participants were chosen to be the interviewees. They were asked questions related to their challenges in promoting learner autonomy. The interview took place in both face to face and online setting. The data gained from the questionnaire were used to answer the first two research questions while the interview data was used to answer the third research question.

4. Data Analysis

. The results of the study was analyzed by Mean Score ($\bar{X}$) and standard deviation (S.D.). The selected participants were later interviewed on the topic of challenges in promoting learner autonomy in Thai context. The data were analyzed by descriptive analysis method.

Chapter IV

Results of the Study

The current study aimed to investigate 1) northeastern Thailand Rajabhat University instructors' perceptions of promoting learner autonomy, 2) the instructors' practices in promoting learner autonomy, and 3) the instructors' challenges in promoting learner autonomy. This chapter shows results of the study which would be discussed along with the research questions.

1. Background information of the participants

The results of the study indicated that there were 87 English Instructors in northeastern Thailand Rajabhat Universities replying the questionnaire. The background information of the participants could be seen below.
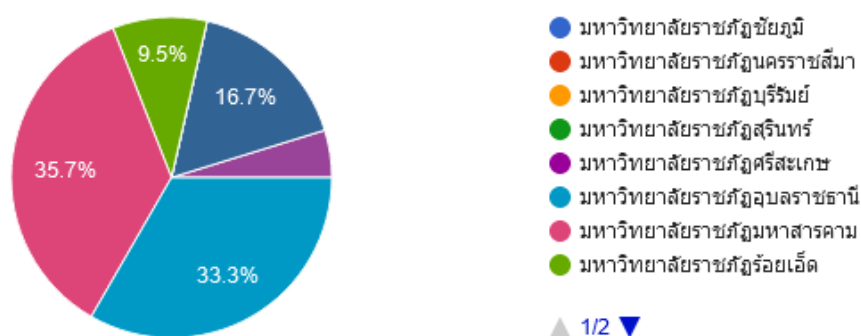
Figure 1 Participants' workplaces

It could be seen in the figure that top most replying participants worked in 4 Rajabhat universities including 35.7% in Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University, 33.3% in Ubonrajathani Rajabhat University, 16.7% in Udonthani Rajabhat University, and 9.5% in Roi-et Rajabhat Univeristy.

Figure 2. Participants' educational background

The result of the study indicated that all of the participants were at the level of master degree in terms of the education level.

Figure 3. Participants' teaching experineces

The results of the study indicated that most of the participants had beteen 6-10 teaching experinces which accounts for 40.5%. Moreover, 35.7% of the participants reported that they had 1-5 years of teaching experiences while 23.8% reported that they had 11-15 years of teaching experiences.

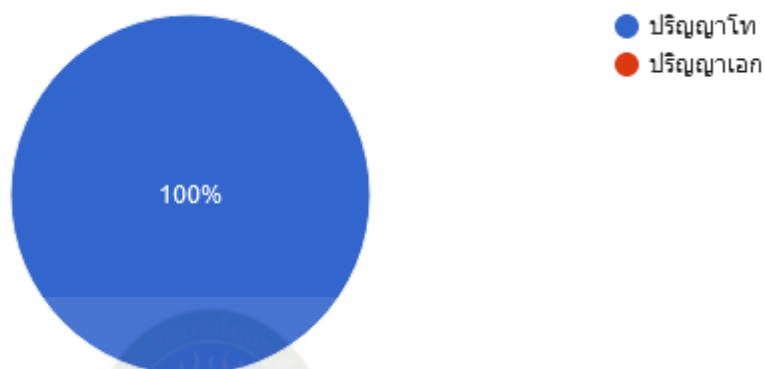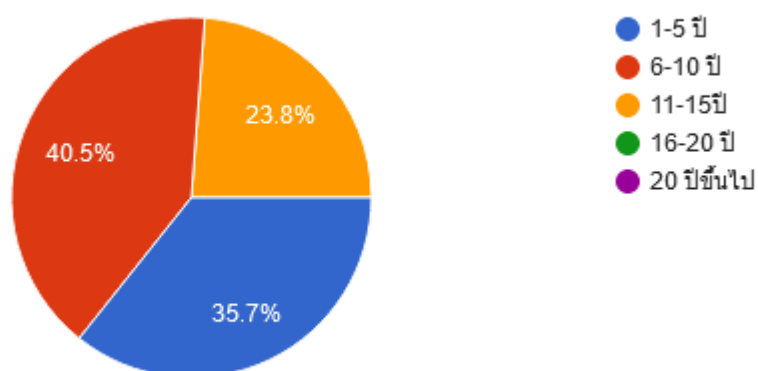**2. Q1: What are northeastern Thailand Rajabhat university instructors' perceptions of the concept of learner autonomy?**

The first research question could be answered by the result of the questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 13 question items in 4 aspects of the learner autonomy. There was a false concept of learner autonomy in the independence of learner aspect. The false concept was added to check understanding of the teachers toward learner autonomy. Perceptions of teachers toward learner autonomy could be seen below.

Table 1 instructors' perception of learner autonomy

Question items	Mean	S.D.
Autonomy means that learners can make choices about how they learn.	4.12	0.78
Learner autonomy is promoted when learners have some choice in the kinds of activities they do.	3.93	0.75
Learner autonomy is promoted when learners can choose their own learning materials.	3.88	0.81
Total	*3.97*	*0.78*

Learner autonomy requires learners to be entirely independent of the teacher.	2.44	1.16
Learner autonomy is promoted by independent work in a self-access centre.	2.51	1.14
Total	*2.47*	*1.15*
Learner autonomy is promoted when learners are free to decide how their learning will be assessed.	3.12	1.05
Motivated language learners are more likely to develop learner autonomy than learners who are not motivated.	4.59	0.67
Confident language learners are more likely to develop autonomy than those who lack confidence.	4.41	0.84
Total	*4.04*	*0.85*
Learner autonomy means that learners are aware of their own learning (e.g., setting goals, developing strategies, and determining content of materials).	4.39	0.59
Learner autonomy means that learners are involved in making choices from a variety of goals, content, and strategies.	3.83	0.84
Learner autonomy means that learners can modify the goals and the content of the learning program.	3.33	1.12

Learner autonomy means that learners can create their own learning styles (e.g., setting goals, developing content of materials, and creating learning tasks).	3.54	1.00
Learner autonomy means that learners can make connections between the content of classroom learning and the world.	4.32	0.79
Total	*3.82*	*0.86*

According to the table 1, it is shown that instructors reported their perceptions of learner autonomy concept in terms of decision making at the level of high ($\bar{x}$ = 3.97, S.D. = 0.81), independence of learners at the level of low ($\bar{x}$ = 2.47, S.D. = 1.15), psychology of learning at the level of high ($\bar{x}$ = 4.04, S.D. = 0.85), and level of autonomy at the level of high ($\bar{x}$ = 3.82, S.D. = 0.86). It could be inferred that participants understood general concepts of learner autonomy since they agreed with the true concepts of leaner autonomy and were not be distracted by the false concepts consisted in the questionnaire.

3. Q2: Do the instructors promote learner autonomy in their classroom?

Teachers' practices in promoting learner autonomy was investigated using the part 3 of questionnaire. There were 8 questions in 3 aspects of learner autonomy promoting. The aim of the questionnaire was to investigate teachers' beliefs in their practices in learner autonomy promotion in their language classes. The result of the study could be seen below.

Table 2 Instructors' activities in learner autonomy promoting

Question items	Mean	S.D
Decisions are made on the basis of teacher - learner agreement and negotiations.	3.54	0.84
Learners can make choice about learning materials.	2.63	1.04
Total	*3.05*	*0.94*
Learners are encouraged to develop learning strategies to achieve their own goals.	3.78	0.76
Learners develop their own study plans.	2.78	1.13
Learners identify their own needs.	3.15	1.24
Total	*3.23*	*1.04*
Learners evaluate their own learning.	3.49	1.10
Learners reflect on their own learning.	3.59	1.07
Learners monitor their progress in learning English during the session.	3.73	0.95
Total	*3.6*	*1.04*

According to the table 2, it could be seen that the participants reported that they performed activities to promote learner autonomy in terms of decision making at the level of average ($\bar{x}$ = 3.05, S.D. =0.94), learner independence at the level of average ($\bar{x}$ = 3.23, S.D. =1.04), and psychology of learning at the level of frequent ($\bar{x}$ = 3.6, S.D. =1.04). It could be

inferred that the participants could not insist that they promote leaner autonomy while teaching in terms of decision making and learner independence. However, they report that they promote learner autonomy by promoting psychology of learning.

4. Q3: What are challenges of promoting learner autonomy faced by northeastern Thailand Rajabhat university instructors?

The interview session was held to gather information of challenges that the participants face in teaching. 5 participants gave the information which could be categorized as follow.

- Decision Making

In terms of decision making, most participants report that they found the problems at the systematic level. They reported that the requirement of submitting lesson plan in the form of the TQF 3 (Thai Qualifications Framework for Higher Education) was the great challenge. The document informs how instructors would teach and evaluate the students and is normally required to be submitted before the semester starts. Therefore, it was very difficult to make an agreement with students about the content, material, and evaluation methods.

- Lerner Independence

In terms of learner independence, it is reported by the interviewees that challenges in guiding learners to set their own goals of learning was the great challenge. In Rajabhat Universities, learners came to the system without the clear goals. Some of them just wanted to study in the university without knowing what they were going to do. Therefore, encouraging goals of study was not an easy task. Moreover, the participants were afraid that if they let the

students to be too much independent, the students might think that the teachers did not do their work.

\-   Psychology of learning

In the case of psychology of learning, the participants reported that it was the practicable aspect. They felt encouraging students to be motivated and confident was the instructors' job, and progresses of learning could be monitored all the time if the evaluation were done regularly.

In conclusion, what could be noticed from the result of the study was that decision making and learner independence were the aspects that the participants did not believe to be feasible in their context. However, psychology of learning was the possibility in promoting learner autonomy. What could be inferred from the result of the study was that teachers themselves were not given autonomy by the management since the first two aspects were the results of what teachers can control. Meanwhile, the class motivation and learner confidence aspects are the activities in teachers' responsibility. Therefore, empowerment of teachers might lead more promising results in terms of dealing with difficulties in promoting learner autonomy.

Chapter V

Discussions, Conclusion,

Limitations and Recommendations

The results of the study indicated that the participants understood the concept of learner autonomy. However, they were not certain that they promoted learner autonomy in their classes. Moreover, learner autonomy seemed to be unfeasible in their context in the current situation. The discussion and conclusion of the results of the study could be seen below. Moreover, limitations of the current research methodology and the recommendations for further studies were also provided.

1. Discussions

The results of the study showed that even though the instructors understood concept of learner autonomy, they only partially felt that they supported learner autonomy in their classes as the result of difficulties in systematic structure of Thai education and leaners themselves. The result of the study supported the study of Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) and Shahsavari (2014). It seems that learner autonomy could not be easily established in the EFL context since it has limitation in pedagogical management.

However, comparing to the similar study of Doung (2014), it found that the belief of instructors in managing classrooms with learner autonomy has been changed. In Doung's study, participants reported that they did not manage classes to have characteristic of learner autonomy and felt it was not feasible to encourage autonomous learners. However, in this

study the participants reported that they saw possibility to encourage students to learn and allow them to see their learning progresses.

In addition, the result of the study also showed tendency in promoting learner autonomy in EFL context. In the study of Chan (2003), teachers reported that even though they respected learner rights, they still felt that class activities should be in their hands. However, it seems that instructors are more likely to accept the importance of learner autonomy as it has been reported in the results of several studies (Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) and Shahsavari, 2014; Doung; 2014). Moreover, the result of the current study also reports changes in instructors' belief. Consequently, it seems that the situation of learner autonomy has been improved, and the method may be fully established in EFL context in the future.

2. Conclusion

The study could be summarized that instructors in northeastern Thailand Rajabhat University understood the concept of learner autonomy. However, they partially supported learner autonomy in practice since there were many difficulties related to pedagogical policy and learners' way of thinking.

The result of the study could benefit instructors in terms of adaptation to learning and teaching in the 21st century. It could not be denied that instructor role has been lessened. Teachers need to adapt themselves and promote learner autonomy for the sake of their teaching and learners' achievement. Moreover, the result of the study could benefit scholars who seek to investigate the situation of leaner autonomy in Thai EFL context. The information reported in this study might be a part of establishing learner autonomy in the context.

3. Limitations and Recommendations

Even though the research questions were answered by the results of the study, there were some limitations in the design of the study. First, the study was designed only to survey the participants' opinions which might not be reliable. The next studies should be conducted with mixed method design in order to gain more reliable information. Moreover, the number of the participants might be considered too low. The future studies might expand the size of samples. Lastly, the questionnaire consisted of only three aspects of leaner autonomy in the instructors' teaching activities session which was not equal to the instructors' perception session. Therefore, it was quite dubious to compare the results of the two sessions. The future studies might redesign the questionnaire in order to get more reliable information.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Questionnaire

The Questionnaire of Perceptions and Practices toward Learner Autonomy

Instruction: The purposes of the questionnaire were to investigate perceptions and practices on learner autonomy of English instructors in Northeastern Thailand Rajabhat Universities. The questionnaire was divided into 3 parts including 1) Background Information, 2) Perceptions toward Learner Autonomy, and 3) Practices on Learner Autonomy.

Part 1: Background Information

University

☐ Chiyaphum Rajabhat University	☐ Nakhon Rachasima Rajabhat University	☐ Burrirum Rajabhat University
☐ Srisaket Rajabhat University	☐ Ubonrachathani Rajabhat University	☐ Rajabhat Mahasarakham University
☐ Roi-et Rajabhat University	☐ Loei Rajabhat University	☐ Udonthani Rajabhat University
☐ Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University		

Educational level

☐ Master Degree   ☐ Doctoral Degree

Teaching Experiences

☐ 1-5 ☐ 6-10 ☐ 11-15 ☐ 16-20 ☐ more than 20 years

Part 2: Perceptions toward Learner Autonomy

Instruction: Please fill in the following questionnaire on the basis of the facts of your agreement with the following statements. 5 = strongly agree 4 = agree 3 = neutral 2 = disagree 1= strongly disagree

No.	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Autonomy means that learners can make choices about how they learn.					
2.	Learner autonomy is promoted when learners have some choice in the kinds of activities they do.					
3.	Learner autonomy is promoted when learners can choose their own learning materials.					
4.	Learner autonomy requires learners to be entirely independent of the teacher.					
5.	Learner autonomy is promoted by independent work in a self-access centre.					
6.	Learner autonomy is promoted when learners are free to decide how their learning will be assessed.					

7.	Motivated language learners are more likely to develop learner autonomy than learners who are not motivated.					
8.	Confident language learners are more likely to develop autonomy than those who lack confidence.					
9.	Learner autonomy means that learners are aware of their own learning (e.g., setting goals, developing strategies, and determining content of materials).					
10.	Learner autonomy means that learners are involved in making choices from a variety of goals, content, and strategies.					
11.	Learner autonomy means that learners can modify the goals and the content of the learning program.					
12.	Learner autonomy means that learners can create their own learning styles (e.g., setting goals, developing content of materials, and creating learning tasks).					
13.	Learner autonomy means that learners can make connections between the content of classroom learning and the world.					

Part 3: Practices on Learner Autonomy

Instruction: Please fill in the following questionnaire on the basis of the facts of your agreement with the following statements. 5 = strongly agree 4 = agree 3 = neutral 2 = disagree 1= strongly disagree

No.	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Decisions are made on the basis of teacher - learner agreement and negotiations.					
2.	Learners can make choice about learning materials.					
3.	Learners are encouraged to develop learning strategies to achieve their own goals.					
4.	Learners develop their own study plans.					
5.	Learners identify their own needs.					
6.	Learners evaluate their own learning.					
7.	Learners reflect on their own learning.					
8.	Learners monitor their progress in learning English during the session.					

Appendix B

Structured Interview

Interview questions

1. What do you think is the great challenge about giving freedom to learners in

decision making?, and why?

2. What do you think is the great challenge about enable learners to be autonomous

learners?, and why?

3. What do you think is the great challenge in making class atmosphere to be

autonomous? And why?