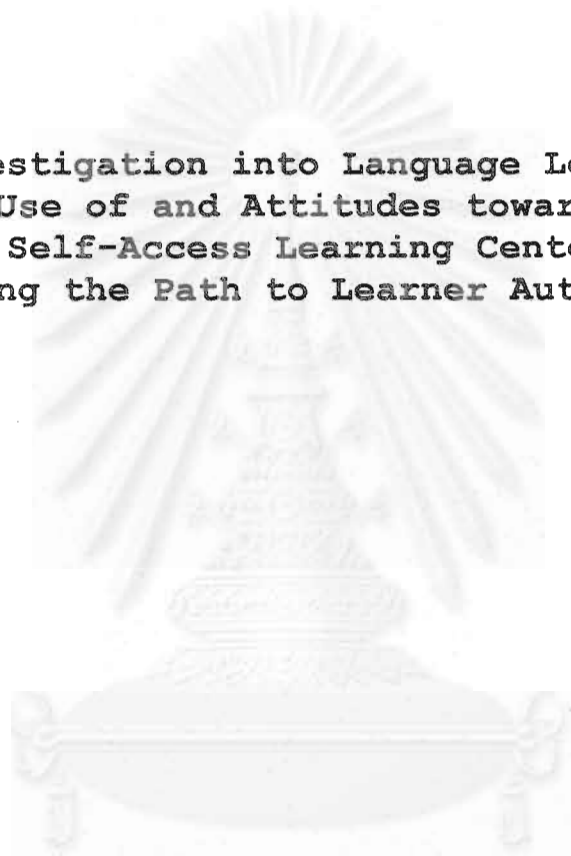


An Investigation into Language Learners'
Use of and Attitudes toward
a Self-Access Learning Center:
Paving the Path to Learner Autonomy



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Abstract

Previous research has shown that classroom-based language learning alone may not be sufficient to lead learners to mastery of the target language. For this reason, language learners' self-directed learning or independent language learning, both in the Self-Access Learning Center (SALC) and in authentic situations outside classes, has become an essential component of English language learning, both in the ESL and EFL contexts. The main objective of this research was to investigate the use of a self-access language learning center by 515 Chulalongkorn University students who were required to earn 5% of their Foundation English II course marks in the SALC. The study also aimed at exploring these students' attitudes toward their participation in the SALC and their perceptions of how effective this participation was. Data collection was conducted by means of a self-administered questionnaire consisting of both closed-ended and open-ended items. The research findings, derived from both quantitative data and qualitative data, zoomed in on these language learners' actual use of as well as their attitudes toward the SALC. Based on these findings, implications for teachers and those who are involved in managing SALCs such as

administrators and SALC staff members are proposed in the hope that if the way SALCs are arranged is based on informed decisions about learners' needs and wants, as well as likes and dislikes, learner autonomy can be better enhanced and mastery of the target language can be better achieved.



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Chapter One

Introduction

Background of the Study

Decades after the emergence of the principle of English Language Teaching (ELT), language instructors, curriculum developers, program designers, material writers, administrators, and even linguists involved in the field have generally given up on finding 'the' teaching methodology that would be suitable for all teaching situations. However, the search for best practice has continued in a sense as evidenced by a continuous shift in emphasis between focus on form and focus on meaning, linguistic accuracy and communicative fluency, whole language and English for Specific Purposes (ESP), to name only a few contrasts in focus.

More recently, yet another change in focus has taken place in ELT practice with the realization that traditional teacher-centered classroom instruction alone may not do enough to allow learners to successfully acquire the target language. With such realization, the classroom becomes more and more learner-centered, the teachers (who, for decades, may have been grown into the habit of being directors of the learning) are forced to adapt to their new classroom role of facilitators or

managers, and learner autonomy has become a goal both teachers and learners strive for.

Learner autonomy proposed as a factor directing learning processes toward learner-centeredness has been both supported and criticized in many areas. One of the arguments for the paradigm shift from teacher-centeredness to learner-centeredness and for learner autonomy has been established in hypotheses and research studies on learning behaviors. Little (1990), for example, indicates that learning is efficiently achieved among learners who are psychologically autonomous; that is, they are able to apply and integrate their previously possessed knowledge in learning new things. According to him, in classroom learning, both "internal psychological interaction" and "external social interaction" are unfolded" (p. 8). The psychological interaction is the dimension supported or promoted by autonomy as, he claims, "all learning is internal to the learner" (p. 9). Over-reliance on classroom learning is, in this light, seen as an impediment for the internal interaction of language learners.

Viewing classroom learning as hindering learner autonomy, however, is perhaps too extremistic as it involves both external and internal cognitive processes. From the analysis of forced output in an interactional classroom and the resultant cognitive processes of

language learners, Swain & Lapkin (1995) observed that second language learners were aware of their linguistic incompetence whilst producing their L2. This provoked their internal processing mechanisms aiding in language learning. In Ryan's (1991) survey on autonomy and collective characteristics inherent in East Asian cultures, it is reported that "autonomy develops most effectively in an interpersonal environment which supports it" (cited in Littlewood, 1999, p. 75). "Concrete support through the provision of help and resources, personal concern and involvement from others, opportunities for making choices, and freedom from a sense of being *controlled* [emphasis original] by external agents," he advances, "were the factors contributing to autonomy within the classroom" (Ibid., p. 75).

Hence, learner autonomy is not largely an issue about the format of learning, e.g. classroom learning versus individual learning, in which it is believed to or not to occur¹ but rather its relative position along the dichotomies of teacher-centeredness and learner-centeredness. Neither is it an absolute value. A classroom can be highly teacher-centered with relatively less degree of learner autonomy, and, on the other hand, highly learner-centered with relatively more degree of

learner autonomy. Autonomy is, therefore, a property underlying most, if not all, kinds of learning. With regard to this, Barnes (1976) believes that:

School knowledge is the knowledge which someone else presents to us. We partly grasp it,..., but it remains someone else's knowledge, not ours. ... In so far as we use knowledge for our own purposes, however, we begin to incorporate it into our view of the world, and to use parts of it to cope with the exigencies of living (cited in Dam, 1990, pp. 17-18).

Only through these perspectives could the role of Self-Access Learning Center (henceforth SALC) be rationally justified. Although SALC is crucial for promoting learner autonomy, it is not a substitution to classroom learning. In other words, learner autonomy is irreducible to the use of SALC. Instead, it is a supplement to creating learner autonomy in stimulating, in Waterhouse's (1990) term, learners' internal psychological interaction. Most basically, it provides learners with rich resources with which they can work on their own. It is, in essence, not a venue where autonomy is readily found but one of the environments in which autonomy can be put into practice.

¹ See further discussion on false beliefs about learner autonomy in Waterhouse (1990).

In an effort to encourage language learners to take charge of their own learning and to provide them with meaningful out-of-class language learning opportunities, Chulalongkorn University Language Institute set up its SALC in 1990. Students (all of whom first-year students except for those studying in the Faculty of Science who are sophomores) who are required to take the Foundation English I and Foundation English II courses earn 5% of their course grade working on the Learning Materials (LMs) provided in the SALC at their own convenience. The present research reports on an investigation of Chulalongkorn University students' participation in the SALC in the hope that light can be shed on these students' behaviors and attitudes toward the use of the SALC so that SALC management and facilitation can be adjusted and shaped to better serve these students' language learning needs.

Significance of the Study

According to Cotterall (1998), the three key variables influencing the roles that teachers and learners adopt in the context of autonomous language learning are culture, mode of learning, and individual differences.

In relation to culture², a number of research studies indicate differences in learners' attitudes toward autonomy. Cotterall & Reinders (2000) report the learners' positive attitudes toward and good use of the SALL (Self-Access Language Learning Center) in the research conducted at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. Although it is unclear if the sample students were those of Western or Eastern origins since a detailed description of the sample is not presented, the findings imply that autonomous learning may be favored in the Western environment (see below in the Literature Review section).

The picture is somewhat different for Ho & Crookall (1995). To tender the procedure for breaking Chinese traditions in English language teaching, they have reviewed a number of research studies and pointed out that autonomy is not a favorable component of language teaching and learning in the Chinese context because of the deeply-rooted respect for authority and the notion of face. As a result, autonomy was not as much desired by students as it should be. The implications from these two studies are as follows. First, language learners of different cultural backgrounds may not have the same stance when it comes to learning autonomy. Second,

² Further discussions on culture and learner autonomy can be found in

attitudes toward and perceptions of learner autonomy may be influenced by the social configurations of the environment in which learners find themselves.. Third, learner autonomy and, closely associated with it, the self-access facility need to be culturally sensitive.

A shift to learner autonomy, a new mode of learning, entails changing roles and responsibilities of learners. In a survey and in-depth interviews conducted at City University of Hong Kong to identify learners' needs and attitudes toward the self-access mode of learning, Detaramani & Chan (1999) claim that the self-access approach to creating learner autonomy requires learners "to be responsible, diligent, and motivated" (p. 24). From the analysis of the findings, they report that the sample students were reluctant to use the SALC. They reason that such a trend is due to Asian students' preference for teacher dependency in language learning.

At the outset, this suggests that students in Asian countries may not be ready for the new mode of learning and for the new roles and responsibilities associated with it. However, this may not necessarily be the case (see Review of the Literature section). Thus, knowing Thai learners' attitudes toward and actual use of the SALC will partially raise the awareness of the parties involved regarding the learners' readiness for, and

Esch (1996), Ho & Crookall (1995), Jones (1995), and Little (1999).

acceptance of, the new roles as autonomous learners. The implications from these findings will also enhance the teachers' new roles of facilitators of learner autonomy.

Individual learner differences should also be accounted for in a move toward learner autonomy. Learner differences may be found in terms of psychological constructs, study habits, personality, motivation, and learning purposes (Sheerin, 1989). With regard to motivation, for instance, learners are "motivated in different ways and to different degrees" (Thanasoulas, 2000). Just in the same way as learners in different cultures have different reactions toward autonomy, learners as individuals differ in terms of their willingness and ability to accept the new role as autonomous learners (Cotterall, 1998). Self-access facilities are proposed as one of the techniques for catering for individual learner needs (Barnett & Jordan, 1991; Cotterall, 1998).

The significance of an understanding of learner autonomy, a realization of learners' perceptions of and attitudes toward and use of the SALC, as well as realistic expectations from creating autonomous learning in the Thai context is manifested in the following quote from Little (1990):

...If we want to promote learner autonomy in our particular environment, we need to be aware of

the conditions and constraints that will define the limits of what can be achieved" (p. 10).

Purposes of the Study

The present study aimed at investigating Chulalongkorn University students' participation in and perceptions of the SALC. Another purpose of this study was to examine the issues on the SALC that are most relevant to the Thai context. The study was also anticipated to unleash aspects not addressed by other studies previously conducted. Moreover, the study aimed at providing a conceptual and practical framework from which further research relevant to learning autonomy and autonomy in learning in the Thai context, through the use of SALC, both by teachers and learners, can be substantiated.

Research Questions

The present study was survey research which attempted to address the following research questions:

1. To what extent do language learners make use of the SALC?
2. What are language learners' perceptions of and attitudes toward the SALC?

3. What are language learners' perceptions of and attitudes toward other key issues related to the SALC, e.g. teachers' instruction about its use, the helpfulness of the SALC staff?

Scope of the Study

The present study was a quantitative survey research conducted with a group of language learners who were enrolled in the Foundation English II course offered by Chulalongkorn University Language Institute in the second semester of the academic year 2002. They constituted the majority of the University's students since only the students in the Faculty of Arts were taught and supervised by their own faculty members.

The research instrument was a self-administered questionnaire developed by the researcher. It was based on a questionnaire about Learners' Perceptions and Practices in the Self-Access Language Learning constructed by Cotterall & Reinders (2000) and on an extensive review of literature on learner autonomy and self-access language learning. The questionnaire consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions in order that as many issues as relevant to the purposes of the research would be elicited.

To attain a specific focus, the research was designed to investigate three main issues. They were 1)

the learners' participation in the SALC; 2) their perceptions of the use of the SALC: its usefulness, their preferences for use of different types of learning materials, and their attitudes toward the usefulness of the SALC in improving their English language skills; 3) their perceptions in other important areas: the teachers' instruction on the use of the SALC, the helpfulness of the SALC staff, and the difficulty in locating the resources they needed. Other key concerns unfolded by the findings would also be raised within the frame of the study. The implications of the research results would also be pronounced.

Expected Outcomes and Benefits

1. Researchers, instructors of English, and SALC administrators/managers of Chulalongkorn University will realize the extent to which the SALC may promote learner autonomy among their students.

2. Researchers, instructors of English, and SALC administrators/managers of Chulalongkorn University will realize the students' practice in and motivation for the use of the SALC; their perceptions of and attitudes toward its use; as well as their perceptions of and attitudes toward the teachers' instruction on its use, helpfulness of staff; and the organization of the venue and learning materials.

3. Based on the findings of the present study, researchers, instructors of English, and SALC administrators/managers of Chulalongkorn University will be better informed when designing the curriculum to promote the use of the SALC that is integral and meaningful as part of autonomous learning. They will also be enabled to provide their students with instructions that positively influence their motivation for and attitudes toward the use of the SALC, acquire learning materials that are favored by the students, organize the physical and service constructs of the SALC that facilitate learner autonomy, and, most importantly and favorably, increase the extent of the SALC use among the students as part of the attempt to engender learner autonomy.

4. Teachers of English and the SALC staff of Chulalongkorn University will have informed reconsideration of their role and responsibilities in promoting the students' use of the SALC, and hence, learner autonomy. In particular, they will realize if they meet the expectations of the students and what they, in directly involving with facilitating the students' use of the SALC, can do to enhance autonomous learning.

5. Researchers, teachers of English, and SALC administrators/managers of institutions both in Thailand and other Asian countries, who apply the findings from

this research as a case study, will be able to organize and manage their SALCs in a way that promotes learner autonomy in their respective countries. With the findings as their guideline, they will also be enabled to conduct research studies that address specific questions most applicable to their educational conditions and learner needs.

Definition of Terms

Self-access language learning is defined as learning that takes place according to the learners' initiation, either with or without the presence of the teacher, with the students having full freedom to choose what materials or tasks to work on and to schedule when to work on those materials or tasks. Self-access learning is sometimes referred to as self-directed learning, self-instruction, or independent learning.

Self-access learning center refers to a place where learning materials and resources are designed and organized in such a way that learners can select and work on tasks on their own at their own pace and obtain feedback on their performance.

Learner autonomy is defined as learners' ability to take charge of their own learning—*independently* making decisions and carrying out choices regarding their own learning without having to rely on their teacher's

instructions or directions, or *interdependently* with their teachers, peers, and more proficient language users in their decision-making and language learning processes while maintaining a substantial responsibility for learning to be their own.

Use of the self-access learning center refers to language learners' utilization of and participation in the SALC, as well as decision-making about tasks to perform and the degree of responsibility for their own learning.

Perceptions of and attitudes toward the self-access learning means learners' ways of thinking about the independent learning, particularly in the SALC, and their participation in it.

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Chapter Two

Literature Review

The present study was survey research which aimed at investigating the use of a SALC by Chulalongkorn University students who were required to earn 5% of the Foundation English course grades from their participation in the SALC. To zoom in on the notion of self-access language learning and related issues, in this chapter, a review of literature has been conducted in the following topics:

1. Second language acquisition theories, language learning conditions, and learner autonomy
2. Overview of traditional language classrooms
3. Conceptions of self-access language learning and learner autonomy
4. Related research

Second Language Acquisition Theories, Language Learning Conditions, and Learner Autonomy

This section summarizes the mainstream second language acquisition theories³ (henceforth SLA) and the framework of language learning. The place of learner

³ This summary is based on Ellis (1985, 1987).

autonomy within these conceptual frameworks will be discussed alongside.

1. SLA Theories

The SLA theories receiving a central position in the field are the Acculturation Model, the Accommodation Theory, the Variable-Competence Model, the Universal Hypothesis, and the Neurofunctional Theory. They can be further categorized, according to their different emphases, into those focusing on the relationship between the socio-affective factors and input, those focusing on the internal cognitive process, and those emphasizing the external interactional processes.

A. Socio-Affective Factors and Input

According to the Acculturation Model (Schumann, 1986), the acquisition of a new language correlates with the view the learner's community and the target language (henceforth L2) community have on each other. SLA will be promoted when learners are acculturated to the L2 community. On the other hand, learners who are not acculturated to the L2 community will achieve a less degree of the L2 proficiency. The degree of acculturation is a factor of the social and psychological distance between the learner and the L2 culture. When the social and psychological distance is favorable, the amount of input the learner receive and the degree to which they are open to that input will be maximized.

Consequently, the learner will become proficient in the language.

A cognitive dimension of the Acculturation Model was proposed by Andersen (1980) who adds to the model the aspects of learning processes. This cognitive dimension is described in terms of nativization and denativization, and the model offered is called the Nativization Model. At an initial learning process, learners simplify the learning tasks to conform to their previously acquired knowledge—the process called nativization. Put another way, the input is made to fit with the learners. When the learning process continues, the learners conform themselves to the input they receive—the process called denativization. The social and psychological distance in the Acculturation Model plays an important role in determining the likelihood of the learners' cognitive processes in leaning toward the nativization and the denativization approach to learning. The learners who are denativized will have adequate access to input, become pidginized, and acquire a greater extent of the L2 proficiency.

Accommodation Theory, although sharing basic assumptions with the Acculturation Model, posits a significantly different stance from the Model. Whereas the latter is focused upon the actual social distance, the former views perceived social distance as an

important variable in the amount of input learners receive and, hence, SLA. As the perceived social distance is relative, it can be constantly negotiated. Closely connected to this is the learners' motivation that, in turn, determines the level of input received and the L2 proficiency. When learners view the L2 community relatively favorably and the key variables in the perceived social distance are supportive, they will require sufficient input and become proficient in the language. As the perceived distance is relative and negotiable, it is also believed that the learner possesses a stylistic repertoire from which they select to attenuate or accentuate their ethnic speech features in accordance with their changing socio-psychological view.

The notion that the learners' socio-affective perceptions toward their own systems and the L2 systems influence their effort in availing to themselves the input crucial and sufficient for language learning sheds some light on the understanding of autonomous learning. Even in an authentic environment where the degree of social support is, at least in theory, high and facilitative, the learners are, in a sense, still autonomous learners as the extent to which they will accept the input and the input is internalized as the intake is decided on the basis of their own perceptions

about the L2 community. Further, Little's (1995) claims that learner autonomy implies a positive attitude toward and the readiness to accept the new mode of learning is supported by a number of research studies reporting that the learners who are in favor of autonomous learning are more likely to engage themselves in it.

Autonomy, however, goes beyond passively responding to the learners favorable and unfavorable attitudes, and providing as much input to the learners as possible. It is concerned with the way in which the input and support are made favorable to the learners, accounting for their stance toward their new roles as autonomous learners. Since the learners' attitudes and motivation toward language learning, according to the Accommodation Theory, are relative and changeable, autonomy also involves the way in which it may be introduced to effect changes in the learners' beliefs about it.⁴

B. Internal Cognitive Process

Krashen's (1981) Monitor Model is one of the most influential frameworks as regards internal cognitive processes. According to him, there are five hypotheses central to SLA. The first one is the acquisition-learning distinction. Acquisition occurs when a language is subconsciously absorbed in natural settings whereas

learning is conscious, formal, and instructed. The acquired knowledge is used for automatic processing and serves for the comprehension and production of utterances. The learnt knowledge, on the other hand, is used for controlling and monitoring the language use. The second hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, posits that the acquisition of formal grammatical features is linear. The monitor hypothesis postulates that the learners use the monitor activated by the learnt knowledge to modify the production of utterances. The input hypothesis claims that the learners will acquire the L2 when the input is slightly beyond their current level of linguistic competence. The affective filter hypothesis accounts for the factors discussed in the previous section. It adds to the contention on the amount of input controlled by the affective domain (as in Acculturation, Nativization, and Accommodation) that the degree to which input is converted into *intake* is controlled by the learners' affective state, influencing the rate of L2 development.

The Variable Competence Model constructed by Ellis (1987) largely accounts for the cognitive processes associated with language use. According to Ellis, language use can be either unplanned or planned. In

⁴ Suggestions on how the learning environment may be changed to facilitate and enhance the development of learner autonomy are made

unplanned discourse, unanalyzed L2 rules are used (called the primary processes), and in planned discourse, analyzed L2 rules are employed (called the secondary processes). Both types of discourse involve with acquisition of new L2 rules and activation of the previously existing ones, and transfer of applicability of analyzed and unanalyzed L2 rules to unplanned discourse.

Chomsky's (1965) Universal Grammar (henceforth UG) is perhaps the most influential proposition on independent language learning. The UG is the linguistic properties shared by most human languages. Closely associated with the UG is the Language Acquisition Device (henceforth LAD). The LAD will be activated when the learners are sufficiently exposed to the input, and, as a result, the UG will gradually emerge. As the development route of the L2 is very similar to that of the L1 and the UG is common linguistic features, the learners will eventually acquire the L2 in the L2 system that makes SLA more complicated. For example, Selinker (1972), in his paper on Interlanguage, explains that the majority of L2 learners often resort to general and nonlinguistic cognitive mechanisms that lessen the activation of their LAD and this fails them from achieving the native-like proficiency.

A neurofunctional theory draws on neurolinguistic research in accounting for SLA processes. One of the major neurofunctional theories is found in the work of Lamendella (1977) that distinguishes Primary Language Acquisition (PLA) found in the child's acquisition from Secondary Language Acquisition (SeLA) comprised with foreign language classroom learning and language acquisition in authentic, natural settings found in the learners after the age of five. The PLA and the SeLA in authentic contexts are connected to the use of language for communication (communicative hierarchy). The foreign language classroom learning is, on the other hand, associated with the cognitive aspects of the use of language (cognitive hierarchy). The two neurofunctional systems further consist of higher order and lower order levels that entail different neural organizations. Hence, it is possible for L2 learners to be exposed to the language without their higher order neural mechanisms being activated. It is also possible that their acquired higher-order systems are used for low-order processing such as for communication.

Autonomy is highly related to the cognitive approaches to SLA in that learners do not passively internalize the new knowledge into their cognitive systems. Rather, they reorganize the new knowledge within the frame of the existing knowledge (Thanasoulas,

2000). Therefore, some aspects of language learning remain internal and accessible only to a specific learner (Little, 1990). As regards individual cognitive differences, learners have, to say for example, their own preferred approach to possessing information, auditory or visual mode of learning, dominance of the left or right brain hemisphere (Sheerin, 1989), tolerance of ambiguity, learning style and approach (Brown, 2000), and pace of development (as suggested by Krashen's Monitor Model). Self-access learning, viewed in relation to these SLA theories, is a good approach in promoting learner autonomy as it allows learners to pursue their own goals and interests while accommodating individual differences in learning style, level, and pace of learning (Cotterall & Reinders, 2000; Yeung & Hyland, 1999).

C. External Interactional Processes

The Discourse Theory, and later the Interaction Hypothesis, has its origin in First Language Acquisition (FLA) tendered by Halliday (1973) who views the development of the formal linguistic devices as emerging from the interpersonal use of language. In Chomskyan's sense, this type of interaction activates the LAD and results in the development of the UG. According to Hatch (1978), there is a natural route in the learners' syntactical development of the L2. In conversational interaction, the native or more proficient L2 speaker

will accommodate to the linguistic competence of the non-native or less proficient L2 speaker. Negotiation of meaning, adjusted input, as well as forced output influence the rate and route of SLA.

Learner autonomy, in this view, cannot be dissociated from its interactional aspect of language learning, and the notion is hence slightly different from that entailed by independent learning. Littlewood's (1999) distinction between proactive and reactive autonomy will be used to explain the point. According to him, proactive autonomy is connected to the learners' self-initiated learning goals and agenda whereas reactive autonomy refers to the learners' responsibility in undertaking and fulfilling the goals set by other people's directions. Littlewood further quotes Flannery's (1994) notion of cooperative learning and collaborative learning. In the former, the teacher is responsible for setting learning goals and agenda with the learners being directly responsible for accomplishing the learning tasks. For the latter, the teachers and learners play equal roles in language learning and teaching processes, and the learners have the choice on the learning items and approaches. Therefore, "'cooperative learning' is a group-oriented form of reactive autonomy, whereas 'collaborative learning' is a

group-oriented form of proactive learning" (Ibid., p. 76).

Accordingly, learner autonomy may then be described in terms of dependent, interdependent, and independent learning. While dependent learning is seen as relatively lack of learner autonomy, interdependent and independent learning, with different degrees of learners' self-reliance, are the two approaches to creating learner autonomy. Independent learning, however, is not completely self-reliant, and, hence, isolated autonomy in the sense that learners still receive external feedback from different sources in monitoring, assessing, and evaluating their learning progress.

2. The Framework of Language Learning

As self-access language learning, and hence, learner autonomy is an approach to language learning (Gardner & Miller, 1999), it is inevitable for practitioners to understand language learning processes and the roles of learner autonomy in such processes. In Beckley (1989), a framework of second language learning is presented taking five sets of variables into consideration, namely the social context, the learner characteristics, the learning conditions, which are the precursors of the learning process, and the learning outcome.

The first variable, the social context, concerns the perception of the social context by the learner, the way that it is interpreted by the individual learner, and its influence on the learners' attitudes and motivations toward language learning. The second variable, the learner characteristics, considers such factors as age and gender, cognitive variables, affective factors, and personality that the individual learners have and their influence on learning. The third variable, the learning condition, deals with the environment in which language learning takes place, e.g. in authentic environment where the term 'second language learning' is used or in formal classroom instruction where the term 'foreign language learning' is used. It becomes apparent that the input and interaction in the L2 are more extensive in the former type of environment than in the latter, and the learning processes involved with each are different. It also entails different educational objectives, content, procedures, materials, and evaluation.

The above three variables are directly responsible for the learning processes that each individual learner undergoes. The learning processes in this light cover both the learners' overt strategies and techniques used in language learning and their internal cognitive operations that can be either conscious or subconscious. Learning behaviors may then be examined by observations

or by inquiries into the learners' objectives, strategies, techniques, thoughts, and feelings. The learning processes are linked with the learning outcomes that are assessed in terms of competence and proficiency. These are evaluated by different approaches such as performance on tests, impressionistic ratings of proficiency, and the analysis of the learners' interlanguage pattern and developmental routes.

Although the framework provides a comprehensive account of second/foreign language learning, it is rather rigid in that it presupposes direct, unilateral, discrete, and causal relationships between the first three variables and the latter two. For example, the social context is a direct precursor to the learner characteristics and the learning conditions that shape the learning processes, and the learning processes are solely responsible for the learning outcomes. But in fact, language learning involves the relationships among different variables that can be both direct and indirect, are bilateral and interconnected, and are not necessarily causal. Moreover, the learners are not a passive but an active agent in the learning processes that determine their learning achievements. In other words, they are, on the one hand, able to drive changes at their will to engender the desirable learning outcomes, and, on the other hand, are influenced by and able to adapt to the

changing nature of the context, the learning conditions, and the actual learning outcomes achieved.

Learner autonomy in the framework of language learning entails a number of significant implications. First, the five variables of language learning need to be accounted for in order for them to be truly beneficial for the learners. Second, realizing these factors is helpful for planners, researchers, teachers, and practitioners in adjusting the degree of and the approach to autonomy to best fit with the sociolinguistic/sociocultural/socioeconomic factors, the learning conditions, and the learner characteristics specific to the settings in which learner autonomy is introduced. Besides this, understanding these social, institutional, and psychological opportunities as well as constraints, the parties involved will be able to better exploit, adapt with, or perhaps influence them in their endeavor to promote learner autonomy. Finally, reflecting on the five key variables in language learning assist the parties involved in setting up realistic goals from and expectations on the success of autonomous learning for their own context. Accordingly, the roles and responsibilities the teachers and learners need to accept in the new mode of learning, autonomous learning, are made meaningfully and practically relevant to the language learning processes.

Overview of Traditional Language Classrooms

The term 'traditional classroom' has been widely used in ESL and EFL educational circles. The meaning of the term may be best defined by considering its nature as well as the teaching methodology dominantly employed in traditional classrooms.

1. The Nature of the Traditional Language Classroom

According to Coelho (1992), there is an ingrained belief in society that competition is the major motivation for human progress and that it promotes excellence in business, politics, and education. The influence of competition in education can then be found in a traditional classroom where individual students strive to do their best by competing with one another. Put another way, most, if not all, traditional students generally seek their own ways to struggle to avoid getting low scores and grades. This striving for ways to avoid getting the worst results in the class probably explains two major characteristics of traditional classrooms: competitiveness and individualism.

As regards competitiveness, Johnson et al. (1993) and Coelho (1992) share a similar view on how competitiveness works in classrooms which focuses on students aiming to be at the top of their class rather

than trying to avoid being at its bottom. According to them, students are required to work faster and more accurately than their peers in an effort to achieve a goal that one or only a few of them can attain. Simply put, students generally compete with one another for a limited number of good grades and teacher approval. As for an evaluation scheme, the feature of traditional classroom assessment artificially limits the number of good grades in any one class or group of students, utilizing norm-referenced evaluation instruments, relating each candidate's performance to that of other candidates (Hughes, 2000). As a result, few students are placed at the top, the majority around the average point or in the middle, and a few in the bottom or failing range. Criterion referenced grading, because it tends to be misunderstood by administrators more accustomed to the more traditional norm-referenced grading approaches, tends to be avoided by staff in conservative or traditional teaching environments because such a progressive grading approach may lead to criticism by administrators if too many students fail to meet specifically defined standards or conversely if too many receive a good grade. In such cases, teachers may be accused of making a course too difficult, too easy, or even being incompetent teachers.

Based on Johnson et al.'s (1993), a clear picture of a traditional language classroom can be depicted as follows:

- Students strive to be better than their classmates;
- Students work to deprive others;
- Students celebrate classmates' failure;
- Students view resources such as grades as limited;
- Students recognize their negatively linked fate; and
- Students believe that the more competent and hard-working individuals become the "haves" and the less competent and deserving individuals become the "have nots."

Thus, in such a condition, it might not be surprising for anyone to hear such students' comments as "Remember that in a class of 30, only four or five may get an A" or "Who can beat Somchai in essay writing?" Evidently enough, there is a negative interdependence among goal achievements—students perceive that they can obtain their goals if and only if the other students in the class fail to obtain their goals (Johnson & Johnson, 1987). Besides this, students may perceive school as predominantly a competitive enterprise—they either work

hard in school to do better than the other students or they just simply give up and take it easy as they do not see that they have any chance to win. On the other hand, on the part of the teachers themselves, they may distribute a range of grades that do not truthfully or reliably reflect the real performance of the students so as to avoid the possibility of being challenged or criticized by their school administrators.

With regard to individualism in a traditional classroom, when the students view their class as a place to compete with one another, it is possible that they may separate themselves from their classmates and individually struggle academically to achieve their learning goals. Johnson & Johnson (1987) name such a situation "individualistic learning." According to them, individualistic learning takes place when students are required to work individualistically on their own and they work by themselves in order to accomplish learning goals unrelated to those of other students. Also, students may have their own set of materials and work and progress at their own pace, ignoring the other students in their class for fear that if the others know what they are doing and how good they are, they may somehow find ways to do and be better.

In addition, in a traditional classroom with individualistic learning, individual goals are assigned

each day, and students' efforts may be evaluated on a criterion-referenced basis, designed to "classify people according to whether or not they are able to perform some task or set of tasks satisfactorily" (Hughes, 2000, p. 18). Although Johnson et al. (1993) conclude that in such a situation, students are expected and encouraged to focus on their self interest, and to value their own efforts and successes, while ignoring the successes and failures of others, it is still more likely where criterion-referenced grading is used as opposed to norm-referenced grading that students will cooperate because helping a friend or a classmate to get a good grade will not in any way affect their own chances of getting a good grade in the same way that it would if norm-referenced grading is employed. According to Johnson & Johnson (1987), such individualistic learning situations result in student perceptions that their learning goals are unrelated to what other students do in class. Obviously, this discourages students from engaging in classroom interaction that provides rich language input, output, and context.

2. The Teaching Methodology Employed in Traditional Classrooms

In a traditional classroom, teachers tend to base their teaching methods on grammar-based instruction, or the so-called "traditional approach" (Metecetum, 2001).

As a consequence, students do not have much chance to practice or create language freely and meaningfully to ensure their understanding. Rather, they are often expected to do what the teachers say or do or learn only what the teachers want them to know. Besides, the language used in a traditional classroom tends to be the students' native language.

As Kagan (1995) contends, the input, output, and context in traditional classrooms do not facilitate students' acquisition of the target language because the input that can foster language acquisition has to be comprehensible, developmentally appropriate, redundant, and accurate. However, the traditional language classroom provides only accurate input from the perspective of the teacher. Kagan further points out that the feature of the output that is critical to the development of language proficiency has to be functional and communicative, frequent, redundant, as well as consistent with the identity of the speaker. Hence, the traditional language classroom obviously lacks these necessary features as the output delivered by the students is generally fragmented and mechanical, and it is generally offered as the students are required to complete the dry drill exercises provided by the teachers. Finally, according to Kagan, language acquisition can only be fostered and satisfactorily

evolve under the context that is supporting and motivating, communicative and referential, developmentally appropriate, and rich in feedback. Again, the traditional classroom is vividly far from creating such context. This has led to the conclusion that a traditional classroom, with its competitiveness in nature and dominant teacher-centered approaches, may not be very effective in promoting language acquisition or leading students to mastery of the target language.

Conceptions of Self-Access Language Learning and Learner Autonomy

According to Gremmo & Riley (1995), self-access learning has been in existence since the late 1960s. Sheerin (1991) defines self-access learning as a way of describing materials that are designed and organized in such a way that learners can select and work on tasks on their own and obtain feedback on their performance, while Aston (1993) defines self-access as a place where an individual is free to choose what activities to carry out and the time to dedicate to them, with learning self-directed and autonomy encouraged. As such, it becomes evident that a self-access approach requires learners to be responsible, diligent, and motivated to initiate their own learning (Detaramani & Chan, 1999). Further, they need to be able to make decisions about what to learn and

how to learn from the resources available at their own disposal. For instance, they should be able to decide which of the skills need to be improved and which materials will be most helpful to them in improving those skills.

Gardner & Miller (1999) defines self-access language learning in relation to the development of learner autonomy, claiming that self-access learning is basically the same as self-directed learning, self-instruction, and independent learning that assists learners to move from teacher dependence toward autonomy. However, for the purpose of the discussion in this paper, the definition proposed by Cotterall & Reinders (2000) is used as the operational definition:

A Self Access Center consists of a number of resources (in the form of materials, activities, and support) usually located in one place, and is designed to accommodate learners of different levels, styles, goals, and interests. It aims to develop learner autonomy amongst its users. Self Access Language Learning is the learning which takes place in a Self Access Center (p. 24).

Previous research has pointed out that for various reasons classroom language instruction does not always facilitate the full development of the target language (Safnil, 1990). According to Crabbe (1993), there must

be a "bridge" between "public domain" learning which is based on classroom activities and "private domain" learning which is personal individual learning behavior. In this sense, self-access learning can be considered as a 'bridge' as it is a venue where both 'public' and 'private' domain learning takes place.

"Outside the normal classroom framework,..., self-access is an excellent position to promote the learner-centered philosophy (Jones, 1995, p. 228). According to Cotterall & Reinders (2000), any SALC has the potential to promote learner autonomy in a variety of ways: 1) it provides facilities which allow learners to pursue their own goals and interests while accommodating individual differences in learning style, level, and pace of learning; 2) the resources have the potential to raise learners' awareness of the learning process by highlighting aspects of the management of learning, such as goal setting and monitoring progress; 3) it can act as a bridge between the teacher-directed learning situation, where the target language is studied and practiced, and the "real world," where the target language is used as a means of communication; and 4) it can promote the learning autonomy of learners who prefer or are obliged to learn without a teacher.

To further clarify the notion of learner autonomy, Dickinson (1987) maintains that learning autonomy takes

place when learners are totally responsible for all of the decisions concerned with their learning and the implementation of those decisions. So defined, autonomous learners are those who have an independent capacity to make and carry out choices regarding language learning decisions. According to Littlewood (1996), this capacity depends on two main components: ability and willingness. The former depends on possessing knowledge about the alternatives from which choices have to be made and the necessary skills for carrying out whatever choices seem most appropriate; the latter depends on having both the motivation and the confidence to take responsibility for the choices required. Littlewood emphasizes that all these four components need to be present together if learners are to be successful in acting and learning autonomously.

Another way to look at the influences of self-access language learning on learner autonomy is by investigating the autonomous learning processes and autonomy in learning through which learners will undergo and encounter. A self-access learning resource is then a stage where the learners *practically* involves themselves with decision-making as regards the objectives and language skills, utilizing the materials that will most satisfactorily answer their learning needs and learning conditions, organizing the learning activities to meet

their objectives, as well as assessing their own progress toward the established goals (Dickinson, 1987).

In order to be truly productive and integral to learner autonomy, administrators (including teachers) of the SALC are subject to considerations on *resources*: in-house learning materials, authentic materials, activities, access to learners; *people*: the new roles of teachers and students as well as their attitudes toward them; management of the facility; *system* that takes into account the individual needs of its users and learner differences; *reflections* on the part of learners; *counseling services*; *learner training*; *staff training*; *assessment and evaluation of learning progress*; and *material collection and development* (Gardner & Miller, 1999).

Related research

This section presents a review of a number of existing research studies on self-access language learning, learner autonomy, and related issues which have been conducted both in the ESL and EFL situations to yield more insightful information related to the issues under study.

1. Research in an ESL Context

Deteramani & Chan (1999) carried out a study to ascertain the needs of language learners and to

investigate their attitudes and motivation toward self-access language learning in Hong Kong. The researchers also hoped to identify the resources learners expect to find in a SALC and to find out if learners were interested in using a SALC to improve their English proficiency. In this study, a self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data from the sample of 585 learners who were studying in various academic departments at the City University of Hong Kong. The questionnaire consisted of 22 items specifically designed to elicit data regarding these learners' needs, attitudes, and perceptions toward independent learning. After that, 5% of the sample engaged in personal interviews which intended to elicit more in-depth information regarding their views towards independent learning. Students were asked eight questions during the interviews, and quantifiable data were then analyzed. The findings suggested that the learners believed that self-access centers not only helped them develop their English language skills independently but also equipped them for their academic studies and future careers. It was also discovered that the learners who participated in the centers more often than others had a stronger desire to improve their English, a higher level of intrinsic motivation, as well as more positive attitudes toward learning English.

Somewhat different findings can be found in a study of Yeung & Hyland (1999) who investigated the effectiveness of the self-access language learning in Hong Kong. In their study, self-access learning was integrated as part of a traditional classroom-taught advanced business communication course, which focused primarily on report writing and making oral presentations. The course was offered to 111 second-year students majoring in Business. Self-access language learning was integrated with the aim to make the self-access component a complement to the classroom activities allowing students to assess their own needs while allowing teachers to suggest activities to the individual students that might have specific problems or problems related to the course content. The students were asked to work in the SALC one hour per week, and they had freedom to choose the materials they liked to work on from the list given. At the end of the semester, a questionnaire was administered, and the data analysis revealed a number of interesting findings. First, only fewer than one-quarter of the students indicated that they received sufficient guidance from the teachers on how to use the SALC. Secondly, students were more positive about SALC for improving their general English rather than helping them to fulfill the specific goals of the business English course. Next, although the students

rated working in the SALC as a slightly more interesting form of learning than regular class work and homework, nearly half of them were not sure whether they wanted to do activities in the SALC in the following semester. Also, even though the students indicated that they viewed working in the SALC helpful to their language development, they found it difficult to continuously carry on the participation and cited lack of time as the most important obstacle. The researchers admitted that they found the findings to be rather disappointing, yet they were encouraged that most students seemed to have a favorable attitude toward SALC despite their reservations about it. Based on these findings, the researchers concluded that students needed more guidance to make informed choices in SALC, especially guidance provided at the individual level. They also needed assistance in identifying the specific course learning targets and in evaluating their own needs before successful participation in the SALC could be anticipated.

In the southern hemisphere, Cotterall & Reinders (2000) surveyed learners' perceptions and practice in self-access language learning during a 12-week English course taught by a total of 15 staff at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. There were 153 subjects from 25 different countries who participated in the study. These students were categorized into two

groups—the first wished to pursue their tertiary study in New Zealand while the second wanted to develop their English proficiency for professional purposes. The researchers reported that the majority of the subjects had positive attitudes toward self-access language learning with 90% of them seeing the SALC as quite or very important for their language learning, 88% stating that the SALC assisted them in self-directed learning, and 93% seeing learning how to learn independently as an important course goal. The correlation between the learners' perceptions toward the SALC and their frequency of use was statistically significant at the level of 0.01. It was also found that the less proficient learners made more frequent use of the facility than did the more proficient ones, and the more proficient learners saw the facility as less useful than did the less proficient ones. Another interesting finding from the study was that 70% of the subjects reported that they worked in the SALC only on things they wanted to do. Cotterall & Reinders inferred that this may have reflected either the learners' self-awareness on the importance and usefulness of autonomous learning or the teachers' suggestions on learning activities outside classrooms. Finally, the study reported a higher degree of the SALC use among the learners in the former group than those in the latter group.

In brief, researchers have discovered different results when it came to language learners' use of and perceptions about the SALC. These pieces of information are of interest to the researcher as the Thai learners' motivation to autonomous learning is anticipated to possibly be different.

2. Research in an EFL Context

A review of literature revealed that there are not many research studies on self-access language learning and learner autonomy which have been conducted with Thai learners of English in Thailand. However, those that are in existence have yielded insightful information which can be implemented by those interested in helping their students make the most of self-access language learning.

Anantasate (2001) conducted a qualitative study to develop a teaching and learning process to enhance learner autonomy of 47 Chulalongkorn University students, with 15 subsequently singled out as cases for further in-depth analysis. The teaching and learning process implemented in this research aimed at raising learners' awareness of their essential roles as learning partners and promoting learners' positive attitudes toward themselves, their peers, their teachers, and their language learning. At the same time, the teacher, instead of performing a traditional role of teaching director, changed to a new role of learning partner,

facilitator, counselor, and resource. As for evaluation, the students' performance was assessed based on the learners' effort invested in learning and self-improvement. The researcher observed the qualities of autonomous learners including readiness and willingness to undertake their learning responsibilities, their abilities to analyze their own learning needs, their capacity to set their learning goals and devise plans to achieve such goals, their capacity to assess themselves and to solve problems, and their perceived self-esteem. The findings led the researcher to the conclusion that students of different ability and autonomy readiness levels who were motivated to become more involved in the teaching and learning process found their learning experience more meaningful and rewarding.

Intratrat (2000) conducted a preliminary experimental study with undergraduate and graduate students at King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT) to evaluate English listening proficiency of the KMUTT's SALC users as well as to determine the significance of the SALC's role in autonomous learning, particularly in developing listening proficiency. The volunteer subjects from the four main faculties of the institute, namely Science, Energy, Engineering, and Education, were divided into two groups—14 in the experimental group and eight in the control group. At the beginning of the experiment,

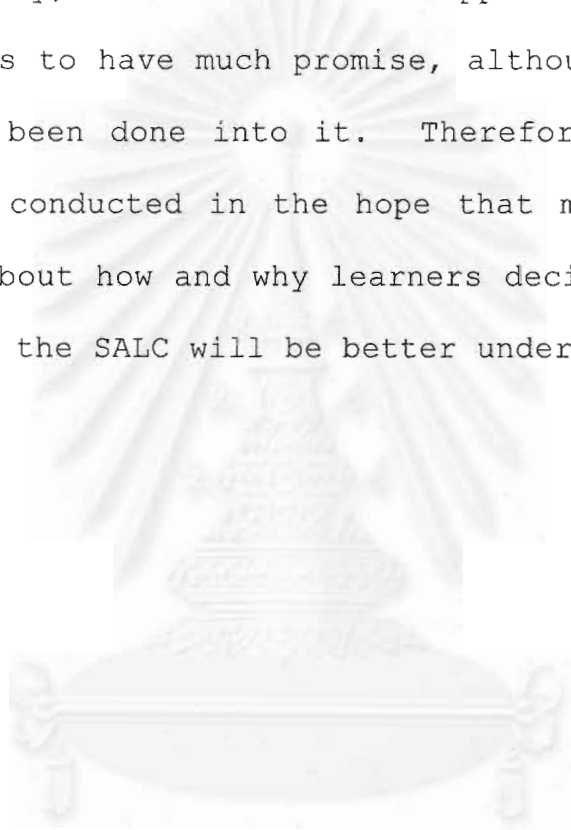
the pretest which was adapted from, and was considered statistically equivalent to, the listening section of the TOEFL test was given to the subjects. After that, those in the experimental group practiced their English listening for 20 hours in the KMUTT SALC where there were listening booths with dozens of materials from which the subjects could freely select. The subjects were also allowed to choose the time and pace of their practices as they saw fit. On the other hand, the subjects in the control group did no SALC listening practice. The posttest was then administered with both groups of subjects at the end of the experiment. The findings revealed that the SALC users' English listening proficiency increased more statistically significantly than that of the non-users. However, the F-test showed that the subjects' development of listening proficiency was not significantly affected by the number of days, the frequency of visits, the length of visits, the time of visits, and the series of materials in the SALC at the 0.05 level.

Also at KMUTT, Mills (2002) carried out a study to investigate the advantages of providing video support materials for self-access learners as well as the drawbacks the learners faced particularly with authentic video materials. In his study, the video material was tested with three groups of second-year undergraduate

students from a variety of majors, with five students in each group. During the experiment, two films with support materials were shown to the subjects. The purpose of the support materials was to aid comprehension while developing listening skills and enhancing vocabulary acquisition. Before viewing the films, the subjects read a synopsis, went over a list of difficult vocabulary items, and studied a list of questions specific to the story which they were expected to answer while they were watching the film. As the subjects read the questions before viewing and saw three alternative answers to the questions, they were provided with an opportunity to practice listening for specific information, gist, and detailed content. The vocabulary was dealt with in such a way that the subjects had a chance to see the word in citation form to aid long-term memory. They also received an example of these vocabulary items' use to aid recognition. After the viewing ended, each subject then completed a questionnaire, and each group was interviewed after viewing the videos and using the support materials. The data obtained from the questionnaire and the interviews led the researcher to conclude that film-specific support materials can increase language learners' motivation to practice listening in the SALC as using the same generic worksheet for different films may quickly bore users,

although users who need the more controlling specific support materials at the beginning could be encouraged to move to global materials that encourage them to be more autonomous learners at a later stage in their learning process.

In summary, the self-access approach to language learning seems to have much promise, although very little research has been done into it. Therefore, the present research was conducted in the hope that more insightful information about how and why learners decide to learn by themselves in the SALC will be better understood.



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Chapter Three

Research Methodology

The present research employed a survey designed to elicit information on the use of a SALC by Chulalongkorn University students who were required to earn up to 5% of their Foundation English course grades from their participation in the SALC. This chapter describes the procedures followed while conducting the present research, presented in the following sequence:

1. population and sampling;
2. setting;
3. protection of human subjects;
4. instrumentation;
5. data collection; and
6. data analysis.

Population and Sampling

The target population of this study was first-year Chulalongkorn University students who were required to take the Foundation English II course in the second semester of the year 2002. There were approximately 4,000 students who took the course, most of whom were first-year students the main exception being those studying in the Faculty of Science who were required to

enroll in the course in their second year at the university.

The subjects of the present research were recruited by means of convenience sampling. In particular, the researcher asked for cooperation from teachers who taught the course in distributing the questionnaires to the students in their classes. Not all teachers who taught these classes were asked but only those who were acquainted with the researcher and who showed willingness or enough interest in the study to help. According to Cohen et al. (2000), convenience sampling, or what is sometimes called opportunity sampling, involves choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents or participants, and "captive audiences such as students or student teachers often serve as respondents based on convenience sampling" (p. 103).

According to Fraenkel & Wallen (2000), the subjects of a survey should be selected from a population of interest. They advise researchers to make certain that the subjects they intend to question possess the information which is being sought and that they are willing to answer the questions. This is because individuals who possess the necessary information but who are not interested in the topic of the survey or who do not understand its significance are unlikely to respond, or respond truthfully. Finally, Fraenkel & Wallen make

suggestions on how to ensure accuracy of information and increase response rates:

Frequently, in school-based surveys, a higher response rate can be obtained if a questionnaire is sent to persons in authority to administer to the potential respondents rather than to the respondents themselves. For example, a researcher might ask classroom teachers to administer a questionnaire to their students rather than asking the students directly (p. 348).

For this reason, convenience sampling was chosen and the researcher asked for cooperation from other teachers who also taught the Foundation English II course.

In addition, it is worth noting at this point that even though some quantitatively minded academics may criticize the merits of the research findings derived from subjects selected by means of convenience sampling, Read (in press) argues for the use of convenience sampling as follows:

Although convenience sampling does not involve any systematic selection procedure, in the field of English language teaching and learning it is quite common to administer questionnaires on certain topics (such as learner strategies) to students in a number of classes in a language teaching program. In this case, the researcher cannot claim that the results of the survey can be generalized in a formal sense to

a larger population, *but the findings may still provide very useful insights into the learning behavior or attitudes of the students* [emphasis mine] especially if the classes that are chosen are judged to be "typical" or "representative" of the students in the whole program.

Finally, 515 completed questionnaires were returned to the researcher for subsequent data analysis.

Setting

Data collection was carried out at Chulalongkorn University in the first week of the second semester in the year 2002. At Chulalongkorn University, students in all faculties except the Faculty of Arts are required to enroll in the Foundation English I (FE I) and Foundation English II (FE II) courses in their freshman year. Only the students who are studying in the Faculty of Science are required to take these two foundation courses in their second year due to the faculty's own administrative reasons. FE I and FE II are provided with the objectives of equipping students with basic English language skills—reading, writing, listening, and writing. The classes meet three hours a week, during which the teachers, either Thai or native speakers of English, mainly use the skill-based approach to develop students' skills. One requirement of the course is that students have to

independently work in the SALC once a week to complete learning materials (LMs) aimed at offering them more opportunity to further practice and reinforce the language skills they have previously been instructed on in classes. The students can work in the SALC any time they wish (weekday office hours) outside their FE I and FE II class hours, and their teachers may or may not be present in the SALC to give them assistance. After the students finish working on each learning material, they can check the answer key provided for correct answers. After they grade their own work, they record the date, time, and duration of their participation as well as the name and type of learning materials they selected in a personal folder kept in the SALC. Other than the required learning materials, there are other English language materials for them to use to develop their language skills including grammar exercises, vocabulary quizzes, magazines, short stories, fictions and novels, cassette tapes, video movies, DVDs, and computers that can be used to surf the Internet, etc.

Protection of Human Subjects

According to Pugh (in press), all participants in any kind of research must, ethically, be volunteers in the sense that they are invited to participate in the study, given full information about the purpose,

requirements, risks if any, and potential benefits of their participation.

In the present study, careful steps were taken to ensure the rights of the human subjects. Before completing the questionnaire, the students were clearly and fully informed by their respective teachers that their participation in the study was absolutely on a voluntary basis and they did not have to identify who they were, as only the information about the faculty in which they were studying and their FE I grades were needed. In addition, they were assured that they had full rights to decide whether they wanted to participate in the study or not and that their refusal to participate in the study would not affect their learning or their FE II course grade in any way. The purposes of and the procedure involved in the study were described in detail to the students, and the expected outcomes of the study were also explained. Finally, they were told that the data obtained from them would subsequently be reported only as group data and that the questionnaires they filled out would be destroyed upon completion of data analysis. Finally, they were told that their completion of the questionnaire would then be considered and used as evidence of their informed consent to participate in the study.

Instrumentation

The present study consisted of survey research which employed a self-administered questionnaire as its data gathering technique. A questionnaire was constructed by the researcher based on elements of learner's perceptions of and practice in self-access language learning developed by Cotterall & Reinders (2000) and on an extensive review of the literature on learner autonomy and self-access language learning (see Appendix). In fact, the researcher adopted this questionnaire with the approval and suggestions of Professor Sara Cotterall of the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, whom the researcher became acquainted with during a brief period working as a researcher at that university in 2000.

Apart from asking the subjects to identify the faculty in which they were studying and their FE I grade, the questionnaire consisted of 14 questions. The questions included were, in general, aimed at eliciting information about how the subjects used the SALC and their attitudes towards it through the previous semester. Of the 14 questions, seven items were arranged in a four-point rating scale, or Likert Scale, allowing the subjects to select their answers from a number of given options. The other five were open-ended questions and two were two-response items. Both closed-ended and open-

ended items were included in the questionnaire based on the premise that the former asks all subjects to respond to the same options, allowing standardized data to be more readily obtained, while the latter provides the subjects with freedom of response and as a result certain feelings or information may be revealed that would not be forthcoming with closed-ended items (Wiersma, 1995).

In addition to Professor Cotterall's comments and suggestions, the questionnaire was submitted to two experts in the field of English language teaching and learning who were also familiar with the foundation courses to be examined for content validity and language appropriateness. It is worth noting here that since the questionnaire was in English due to collaboration between Professor Cotterall and the researcher, as well as collaboration between the researcher and Associate Professor Syaharom Bin Abdullah of Universiti Utra Malaysia who had proposed to administer the questionnaire used in the present study with Malaysian learners of English for comparison purposes, extra precautions were taken to make sure that even FE II students with lower English language proficiency would be able to understand the meaning of each of the items. The draft questionnaire was revised accordingly with this in mind before being submitted for expert review. After the content validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by

experts, the researcher proceeded to the next step, data collection.

As for the scoring criteria, only items 2, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13, which were four-response items, were scored and analyzed as follows:

Item 2: "How often did you use the SALC in the last semester?"

| | | |
|--|---|----------|
| Usually more than twice a week | = | 3 points |
| Usually once or twice a week | = | 2 points |
| Only a few times during the whole semester | | |
| | = | 1 point |
| Never | = | 0 point |

Item 5: "How useful do you think working in the SALC is to learning English?"

Item 9: "Do you think that your FE I teacher's explanation of how to use the SALC at the beginning of the semester was helpful to you?"

Item 10: "How helpful was the staff in the SALC who helped you and gave you advice?"

| | | |
|--------------------|---|----------|
| Very helpful | = | 3 points |
| Rather helpful | = | 2 points |
| Somewhat helpful | = | 1 point |
| Not helpful at all | = | 0 point |

Item 11: "How difficult was it for you to find the materials you wanted in the SALC?"

| | | |
|----------------------|---|----------|
| Very difficult | = | 3 points |
| Rather difficult | = | 2 points |
| Somewhat difficult | = | 1 point |
| Not difficult at all | = | 0 point |

Item 12: "Do you think that working in the SALC helps you to improve your English?"

| | | |
|-----------------------------|---|----------|
| Yes, it helps a lot | = | 3 points |
| Just a little bit | = | 2 points |
| No, it does not help at all | = | 1 point |
| I don't know | = | 0 point |

Item 13: "Do you think that it is necessary for FE courses to require you to work in the SALC?"

| | | |
|--------------------------------|---|----------|
| Yes, it is very necessary | = | 3 points |
| Just a little bit | = | 2 points |
| No, it is not necessary at all | = | 1 point |
| I don't know | = | 0 point |

As for interpretation of scoring, higher scores on these items reflect more favorable subject attitudes about their SALC participation, the effectiveness of their participation on their English language improvement, the helpfulness of the the teacher's

explanation and staff, and the necessity of the SALC as an FE course requirement; lower scores indicate the subjects' less favorable attitudes toward these issues.

Data Collection

In the present study, a questionnaire was distributed during the first week of the second semester because at this time the teachers were still in the introductory phase of the FE course attempting to acquaint themselves with their students and only a small amount of teaching was done. Another reason for choosing this time was that it was thought students would likely still have a fairly fresh memory of their participation in the SALC in the previous semester.

The researcher approached the instructors who taught the Foundation English II course before the semester began based on the basis of personal acquaintance. Only those who showed willingness to cooperate or who indicated interest in the topic under study were then asked to distribute the questionnaire to their students during the first week of class. They were asked to emphasize to the students that the students' responses to the questionnaire would not affect their FE II course grades in any way to prevent bias. As a further precaution against bias on the part of the subjects and to enhance the accuracy of the information, the

instructors were asked to inform the students that they should not identify their name or any other personal information except for their faculty and their FE I grades.

The students were asked to complete the questionnaire within their class hour. The instructor allowed 30 minutes for completion, to avoid imposing a time constraint that might have affected the way the subjects would respond. This was allowed when students completed the open-ended items so that they could express their opinions with more preciseness and accuracy. After the subjects handed in the questionnaires, the instructors returned them to the researcher for data analysis.

Data Analysis

The data obtained from the subjects were analyzed in the following sequence.

1. The subjects' demographic characteristics of their major field of study and FE I grade were analyzed in terms of frequency distribution including percentage, means, and standard deviation, using the SPSS computer program.

2. The quantitative data obtained from the closed-ended items in the questionnaire were analyzed to reveal

the subjects' use of and attitudes toward the SALC, using the SPSS computer program.

3. The qualitative data obtained from the open-ended items was analyzed and synthesized by means of categorization. In other words, categories were developed throughout the data analysis process in which units of data were sorted into groups that shared something in common. In the present study, following Lincoln & Guba's (1985) recommendations, attempts were made to assure that the units indicated information related to the study and that might stimulate a reader to think beyond the particular bit of information presented. Each of the derived units was checked and rechecked to confirm that it was "the smallest piece of information about something that can stand by itself—that is, it must be in the absence of any additional information other than a broad understanding of the context in which the inquiry is carried out" (p. 345).

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Chapter Four

Findings

This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section illustrates the demographic characteristics of the subjects in this study, the second section addresses the findings that relate to the subjects' use of the SALC, and the third section discusses the findings regarding the subjects' attitudes toward the SALC.

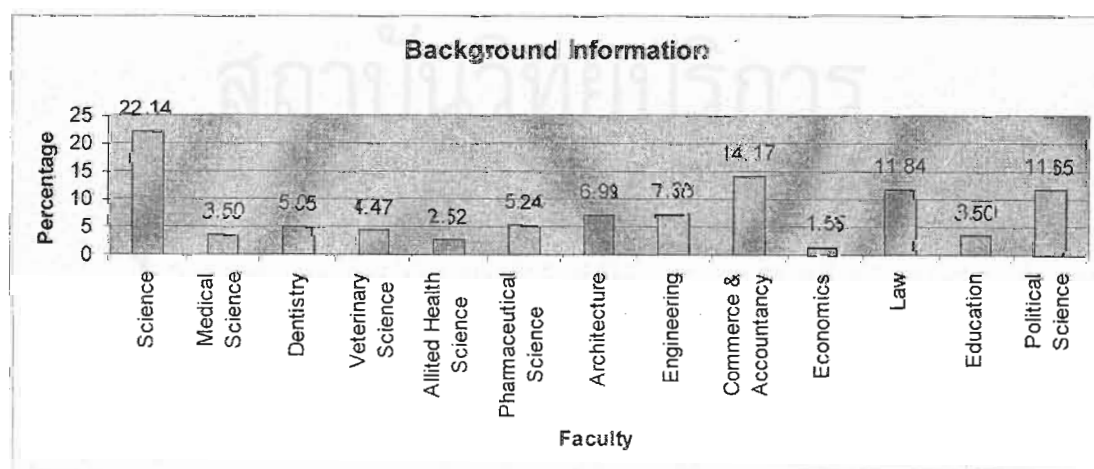
The Findings Regarding the Subjects' Demographic Characteristics

The subjects who participated in this survey were 515 students of Chulalongkorn University who took the FE II course in the second semester of the academic year 2002. They were recruited by means of convenience sampling. The researcher distributed a self-administered survey questionnaire to FE II teachers who were willing to pass the questionnaire out among their students. The subjects were not asked to identify themselves other than providing information regarding the faculty in which they were studying and the grade they received for their FE I course. The following tables and figures illustrate the subjects' demographic characteristics.

Table One Number and percentage of subjects as categorized according to their faculty

| Faculty | Number | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------|--------|----------------|
| Science | 114 | 22.14 |
| Medical Science | 18 | 3.51 |
| Dentistry | 26 | 5.07 |
| Veterinary Science | 23 | 4.48 |
| Allied Health Science | 13 | 2.53 |
| Pharmaceutical Science | 27 | 5.26 |
| Architecture | 36 | 7.02 |
| Engineering | 37 | 7.41 |
| Commerce & Accountancy | 73 | 14.23 |
| Economics | 8 | 1.56 |
| Law | 61 | 11.89 |
| Education | 18 | 3.51 |
| Political Science | 60 | 11.70 |
| TOTAL | 515 | 100.00 |

Figure One Percentage of subjects as categorized according to faculty



According to Table One and Figure One above, the largest group of subjects consisted of those studying in the Faculty of Science, accounting for 22.14%. Second came those studying in the Faculty of Commerce and Accountancy, making up another 14.23%, followed by those studying in the Faculty of Law, contributing another 11.89%. The smallest group of subjects was those who were studying in the Faculty of Economics, totaling only 1.56%.

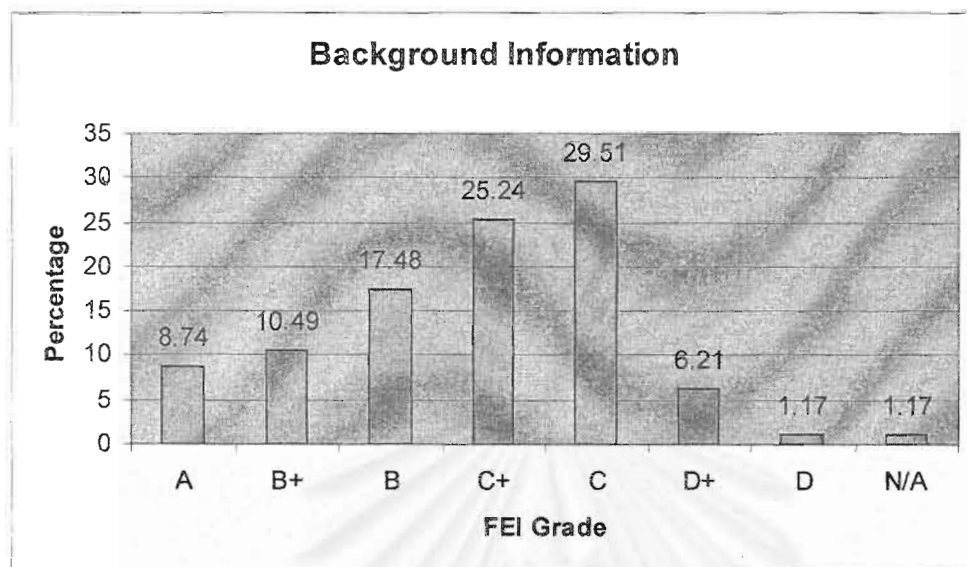
In addition, the subjects could be categorized according to their FE I grades as follows.

Table Two Number and percentage of subjects as categorized according to their FE I grades

| FE I Grade | Number | Percentage (%) |
|------------|--------|----------------|
| A | 45 | 8.74 |
| B+ | 54 | 10.49 |
| B | 90 | 17.48 |
| C+ | 130 | 25.24 |
| C | 152 | 29.51 |
| D+ | 32 | 6.21 |
| D | 6 | 1.17 |
| N/A* | 6 | 1.17 |
| TOTAL | 515 | 100.00 |

*Some subjects refused to identify their FE I grades.

Figure Two Percentage of subjects as categorized according to their FE I grades



As shown in Table Two and Figure Two, the largest group of subjects received a grade of C for their FE I course, making up 29.51% of the total. This was followed by those who got the grades of C+ and B, which accounted for 25.24% and 17.84%, respectively. The smallest group of subjects, or 1.17%, received the grade of D. Just six subjects, or 1.17%, did not specify their FE I grades.

The Findings Regarding the Subjects' Use of the SALC

This section is divided into two main sections. The first section discusses the quantitative findings related to the subjects' use of the SALC. The second section presents the qualitative findings related to the subjects' use of the SALC.

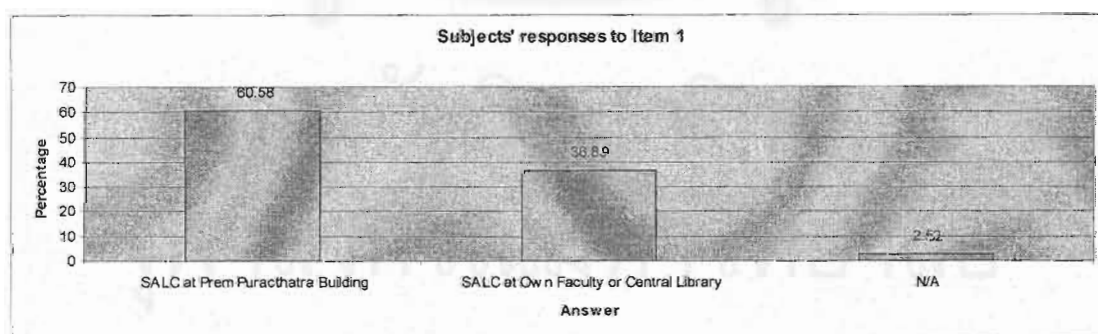
1. Presentation of quantitative findings

The responses elicited from the subjects for each of the closed-ended items are illustrated in detail as follows.

Table Three Number and percentage of the subjects' responses to Item 1

| Item 1: Which of the SALCs did you use? | Number | Percentage |
|---|--------|------------|
| The SALC at Prem Purachatra Building | 312 | 60.58 |
| The SALC at my faculty or the Central Library | 190 | 36.89 |
| N/A | 13 | 2.52 |
| Total | 515 | 100.00 |

Figure Three Percentage of the subjects' responses to Item 1



More than half of the subjects, or 60.58%, used the SALC at the Prem Purachatra Building, while 36.89% of

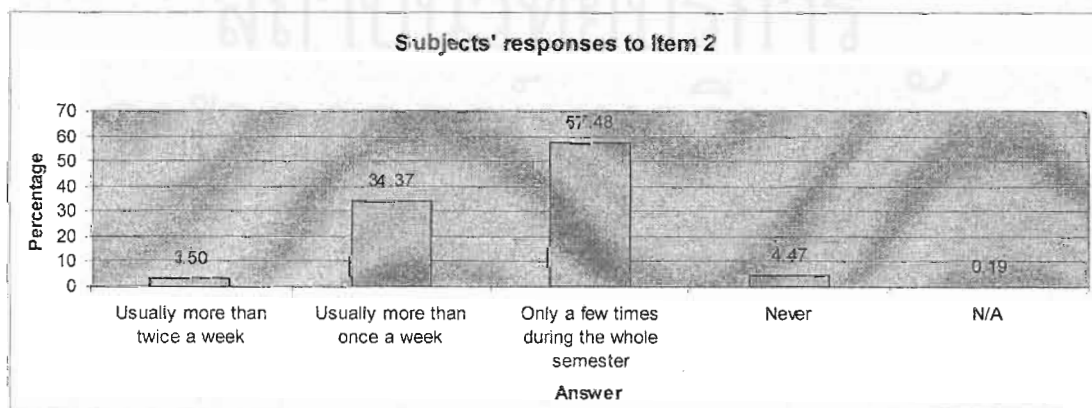
them used the SALC facility either at their own faculties or at the Central Library.

Table Four Number, percentage, average, and standard deviation of the subjects' to Item 2

| Item 2: How often did you use the SALC in the last semester? | Number | Percentage |
|--|--------|------------|
| Usually more than twice a week | 18 | 3.50 |
| Usually once or twice a week | 177 | 34.37 |
| Only a few times during the whole semester | 296 | 57.48 |
| Never | 23 | 4.47 |
| N/A | 1 | 0.19 |
| Total | 515 | 100.00 |

Sum 1218
 Average 2.37
 Standard Deviation 0.63

Figure Four Percentage of the subjects' responses to Item 2



According to Table Four and Figure Four, the largest group of subjects worked in the SALC only a few times during the past semester, while 34.37% participated in the SALC more than once or twice a week. It is worth noting that 23 subjects, or 4.47%, indicated that they had never worked in the SALC at all even though their participation in the SALC was a compulsory course requirement.

Table Five Number and percentage of the subjects' responses to Item 3

| Item 3: You went to the SALC mainly because... | Number | Percentage |
|---|--------|------------|
| My teachers told me to. | 347 | 67.38 |
| I decided to go to the SALC myself to improve my English. | 162 | 31.46 |
| N/A | 6 | 1.17 |
| Total | 515 | 100.00 |

Figure Five Percentage of the subjects' responses to Item 3

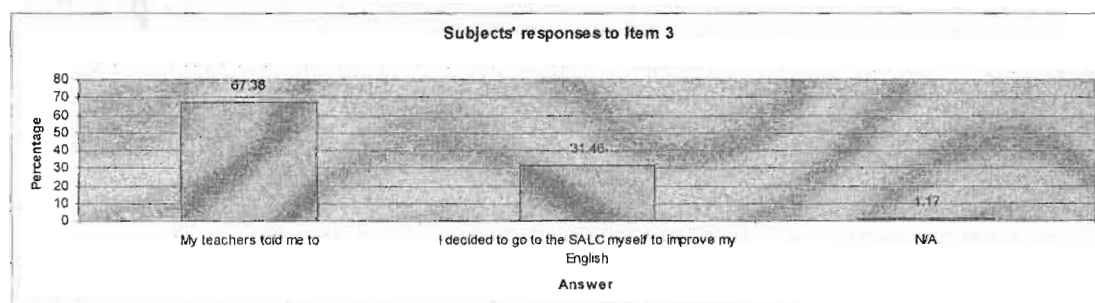


Table Five and Figure Five show that more than half of the subjects went to the SALC just because they were told by the teachers to do so. Only 31.46% of the subjects indicated that they chose to work in the SALC by themselves because they wanted to develop their language skills.

2. Presentation of qualitative findings

Item 4: "Could you tell us why you did not use the SALC more often?"

This item was an open-ended question which asked the subjects to indicate the reasons why they did not use the SALC more often than they had. Not all the subjects responded to this question, even though they were informed that they could answer in Thai. The subjects' responses could be categorized as follows, with the numbers in the parentheses indicating the percentage of subjects who provided such a response.

- Having no time because of study-related reasons (38.83%)
- Being too lazy (17.80%)
- The SALC being located too far away from the faculty (6.04%)
- Materials being too ineffective or too boring (3.90%)

- Not knowing how to use the SALC well enough (2.14%)
- Having no interest in English (2.05%)

The Findings Regarding the Subjects' Attitudes toward the SALC

Like the previous section, this section is divided into two main sections. The first section discusses the quantitative findings related to the subjects' attitudes toward the SALC. The second section presents the qualitative findings related to the subjects' attitudes toward the SALC.

1. Presentation of quantitative findings

The responses elicited from the subjects for each of the closed-ended items are illustrated in detail as follows.

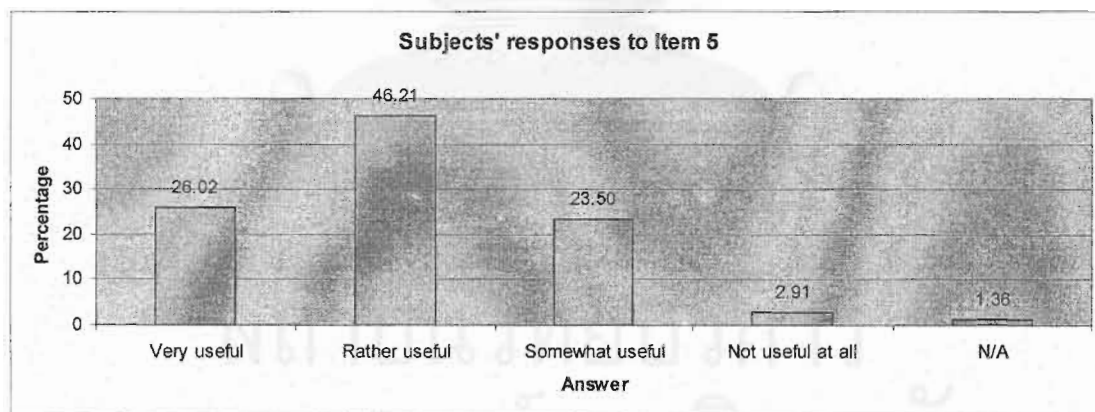
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Table Six Number and percentage of the subjects' responses to Item 5

| Item 5: How useful do you think working in the SALC is to learning English? | Number | Percentage |
|---|--------|------------|
| Very useful | 134 | 26.02 |
| Rather useful | 238 | 46.21 |
| Somewhat useful | 121 | 23.50 |
| Not useful at all | 15 | 2.91 |
| N/A | 7 | 1.36 |
| Total | 515 | 100.00 |

Sum 1507
 Average 2.97
 Standard Deviation 0.79

Figure Six Percentage of the subjects' responses to Item 5



As depicted in Table Six and Figure Six, close to half of the subjects, or 46.21%, believed that working in the SALC was rather useful to their language development, while a little more than a quarter, or 26.02%, saw working in the SALC as very useful to their improvement

of the English language. However, 15 subjects, or 2.91%, felt that working in the SALC was not useful at all to help them practice their English.

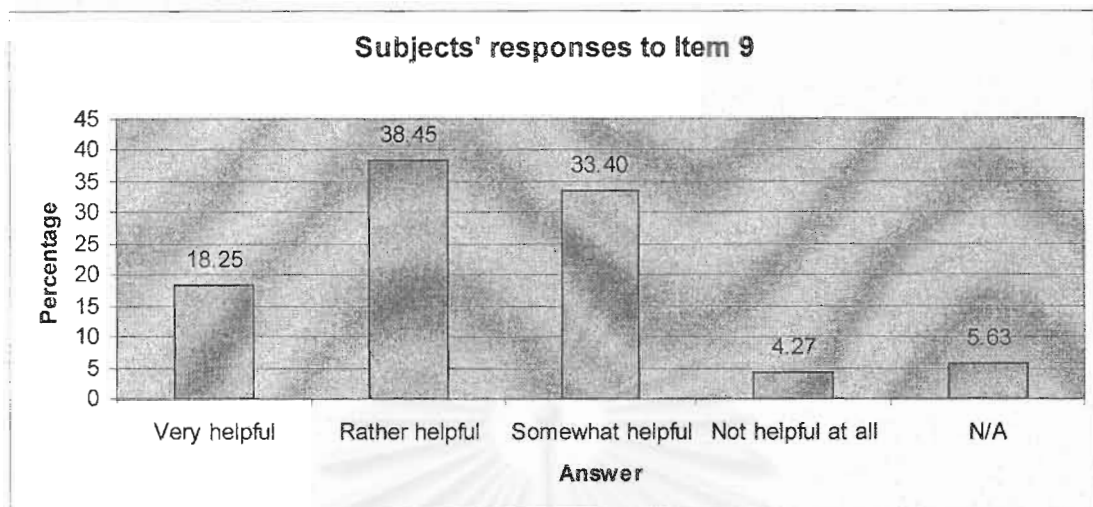
Table Seven Number, percentage, average, and standard deviation of the subjects' to Item 9

| Item 9: Do you think that your FE I teacher's explanation of how to use the SALC at the beginning of the semester was helpful to you? | Number | Percentage |
|---|--------|------------|
| Very helpful | 94 | 18.25 |
| Rather helpful | 198 | 38.45 |
| Somewhat helpful | 172 | 33.40 |
| Not helpful at all | 22 | 4.27 |
| N/A | 29 | 5.63 |
| Total | 515 | 100.00 |

Sum 1336
 Average 2.75
 Standard Deviation 0.82

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Figure Seven Percentage of the subjects' responses to Item 9



According to Table Seven and Figure Seven, the largest group of subjects, or 38.45%, thought that the explanation received from their FE I teacher was rather helpful to them. Approximately one-third, or 33.40%, believed that the teacher's explanation was somewhat helpful. However, 4.27% of the subjects felt that their FE I teachers' explanation on how to use the SALC appropriately and beneficially did not help them at all.

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Table Eight Number, percentage, average, and standard deviation of the subjects' responses to Item 10

| Item 10: How helpful were the staff in the SALC who helped you and gave you advice? | Number | Percentage |
|---|--------|------------|
| Very helpful | 44 | 8.54 |
| Rather helpful | 131 | 25.44 |
| Somewhat helpful | 207 | 40.19 |
| Not helpful at all | 103 | 20.00 |
| N/A | 30 | 5.83 |
| Total | 515 | 100.00 |

Sum 1086
 Average 2.24
 Standard Deviation 0.89

Figure Eight Percentage of the subjects' responses to Item 10

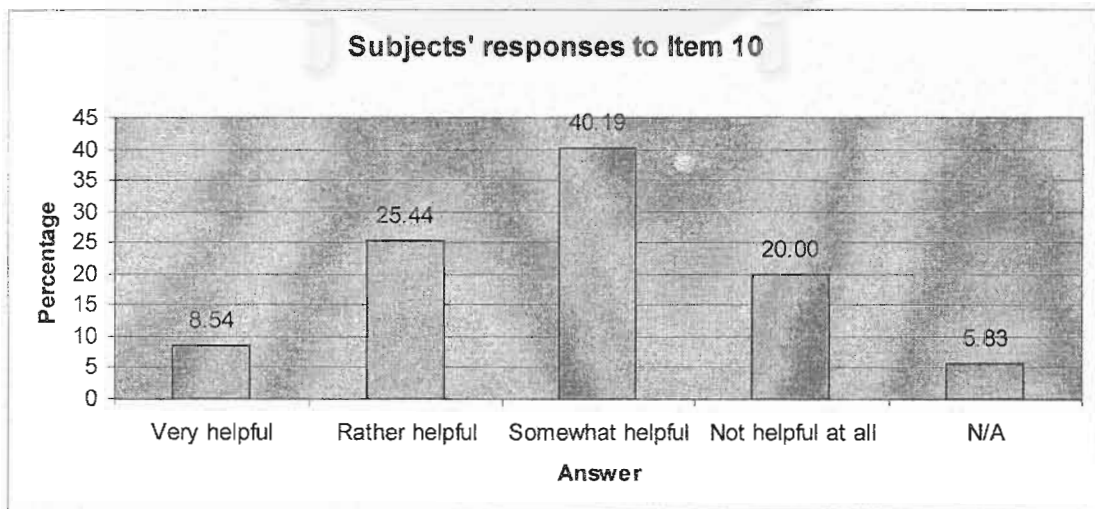


Table Eight and Figure Eight illustrate that close to half of the subjects, or 40.19%, felt that the staff

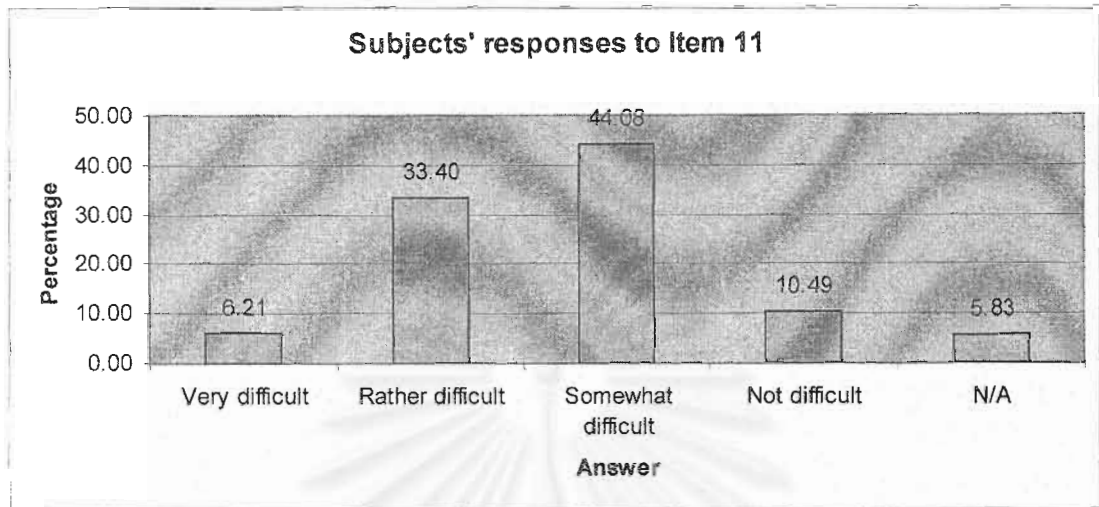
who were responsible for assisting them and giving them advice were only somewhat helpful. Most importantly, it is noteworthy that the smallest percentage of the subjects who responded to this item, or only 8.54% of the total, felt that the staff members in the SALC were very helpful when they needed assistance. Also, as many as one-fifth of the subjects felt that the SALC staff were not helpful at all to their participation in the SALC.

Table Nine Number, percentage, average, and standard deviation of the subjects' responses to Item 11.

| Item 11: How difficult was it for you to find the materials you wanted in the SALC? | Number | Percentage |
|--|---------------|-------------------|
| Very difficult | 32 | 6.21 |
| Rather difficult | 172 | 33.40 |
| Somewhat difficult | 227 | 44.80 |
| Not difficult at all | 54 | 10.49 |
| N/A | 30 | 5.83 |
| Total | 515 | 100.00 |

Sum 1152
Average 2.38
Standard Deviation 0.77

Figure Nine Percentage of the subjects' responses to Item 11



As shown in Table Nine and Figure Nine, close to half of subjects indicated that it was somewhat difficult for them to locate the materials they wanted to work on in the SALC. Only 10.49% of the subjects experienced no difficulty in finding the materials they wanted, while 6.21% stated that it was very difficult for them to locate the materials they were looking for.

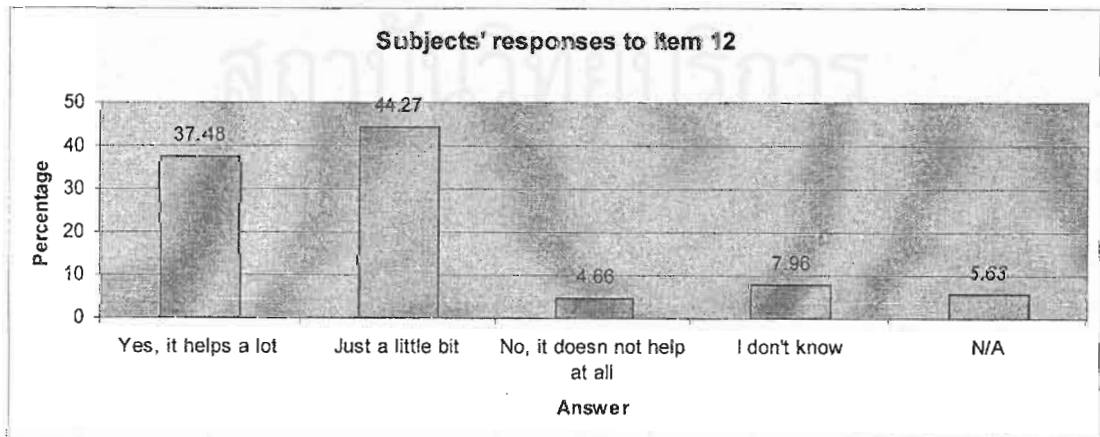
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Table Ten Number, percentage, average, and standard deviation of the subjects' responses to Item 12

| Item 12: Do you think that working in the SALC helped you to improve your English? | Number | Percentage |
|--|--------|------------|
| Yes, it helped a lot. | 193 | 37.84 |
| Just a little bit. | 228 | 44.27 |
| No, it does not help at all. | 24 | 4.66 |
| I don't know. | 41 | 7.96 |
| N/A | 29 | 5.63 |
| Total | 515 | 100.00 |

Sum 885
 Average 1.82
 Standard Deviation 0.87

Figure Ten Percentage of the subjects' responses to Item 11

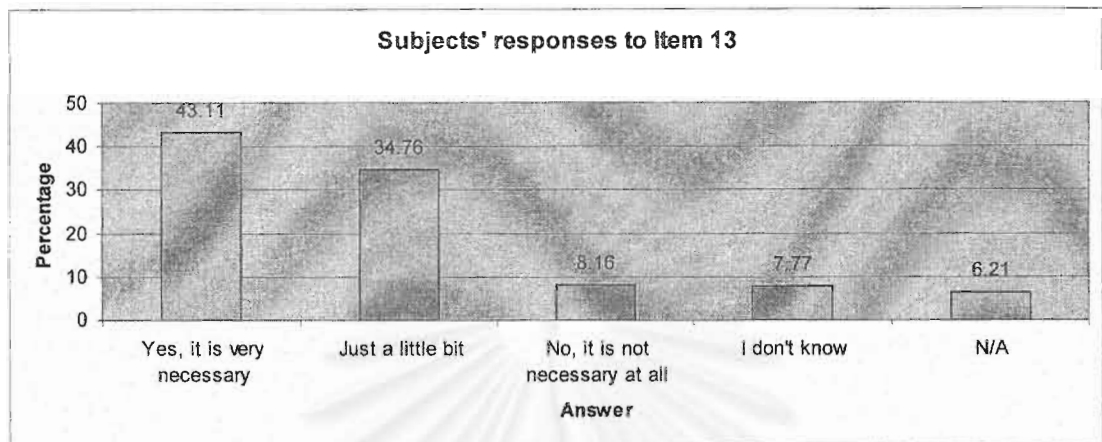


Surprisingly, close to half of the subjects, or 44.27%, found their participation in the SALC helped develop their English language skills "just a little bit," whereas 37.48% believed that working in the SALC was very beneficial to their language development. It is also worth noting that 4.0% of the subjects felt that SALC was not helpful to them at all, while 7.96% had no idea whether practicing in the SALC led to English language improvement or not.

Table Eleven Number, percentage, average, and standard deviation of the subjects' responses to Item 13

| Item 13: Do you think that it is necessary for FE courses to require you to work in the SALC? | Number | Percentage |
|--|---------------|-------------------|
| Yes, it is very necessary. | 222 | 43.11 |
| Just a little bit. | 179 | 34.76 |
| No, it is not necessary at all. | 42 | 8.16 |
| I don't know. | 40 | 7.77 |
| N/A | 32 | 6.21 |
| Total | 515 | 100.00 |
| <i>Sum</i> | <i>868</i> | |
| <i>Average</i> | <i>1.80</i> | |
| <i>Standard Deviation</i> | <i>0.92</i> | |

Figure Eleven Percentage of the subjects' responses to Item 13



As shown in Table Eleven and Figure Eleven, when asked whether they thought it was necessary to include participation in the SALC as part of the requirements for the FE courses, close to half of the subjects, or 43.11%, stated that working in the SALC should be required. This was followed by about a third of the subjects, or 34.76%, who stated that SALC participation was necessary "just a little bit." Only 8.16% of the subjects did not think that SALC was necessary for the foundation English courses, and 7.77% had no idea whether the SALC participation is a necessary requirement for their FE courses or not.

2. Presentation of qualitative findings

There were five open-ended items which elicited the subjects' attitudes toward their participation in the SALC. The subjects' responses to each of these open-ended items are illustrated below. Some subjects chose to respond in Thai, while others responded in English. All through this section, the subjects' responses in English are italicized, with no grammar corrections made.

Item 6: "What do you like most about SALC?"

Examples of the subjects' more frequently found responses are as follows:

- The responses related to the materials in the SALC

"There are lots of activities to work on."

"Listening activities. I can practice listening to native accents."

"Practice tests"

"Grammar exercises because there are explanations in Thai which are easy to understand."

"I like the Bangkok Post and English magazines."

"Watching movies because I didn't watch some movies in the theater and I don't have to pay for video rental."

"The computer room and the Internet."

"Vocabulary practice"

"Games about English language"

"Reading"

"The lessons are funny."

- The responses related to other aspects of the SALC

"The room has the air conditioner."

"The atmosphere in the room. It is very quiet."

Item 7: What materials would you like to see more of in the SALC?

Again, only some of the interesting findings are illustrated below.

- Responses related to the activities in the SALC
 - Idioms from movies or songs
 - Teenager magazines
 - Animations
 - Up-to-date movies
 - Documentary magazines
 - Computer to search for information
 - More speaking practices
 - More communicative grammar

- All around the world travel tips in English
- Internet
- Vocabulary from songs
- Error identification exercises
- DVD players
- English conversation in cartoon versions
- English videos with Thai subtitles
- Speaking activities such as listening and then
- repeating after what has been listened to
- More explanations on tests (now only the correct answers are given, but there were no explanations why they were correct)
- Response related to other aspects of SALC
 - Smile of officers*

It is interesting that while all of the subjects indicated what they wanted to see more of in the SALC in terms of the activities that could help them improve their English language skills, there was one subject who stated that he or she wanted to see a smile on the face of SALC staff members!

Item 8: "What is the most difficult thing for you about working in the SALC?"

The italicized responses are the subjects' exact wording in English.

- Responses related to materials or activities in the SALC
 - The trouble with video/cassette players
 - Audio cassettes, video cassettes
 - Too many of exercises
 - I don't know where are the papers I have to deal with.
 - Reading practice
 - VDO clips
 - Listening test
 - The writing test
 - Vocabulary practice
 - Communicative grammar
 - Sometimes it's not available or it's damaged
 - The materials are not appealing.
- Responses related to other aspects of the SALC
 - The air conditioner is too cold so I don't want to spend a long time in there.
 - The stairs leading to the SALC
 - The office hours are too short
 - The prohibition of making noises
 - The room is too small. Sometimes it is full when I go there
 - See the smile of officer face
 - Far from my faculty
 - It's hot

Item 14: "Any other comments or suggestions for us?"

- Responses related to the materials in the SALC
 - The materials should be updated because they are too old. The answer keys for some exercises were missing or misplaced, which makes it very difficult to find.
 - The materials are not interesting.
 - I think the curriculum is quite old. You should develop more.*
 - The headphones are not working properly. Sometimes the sound comes out from only one side. Please fix them.
 - Install new equipment.
- Responses related to the management of the SALC
 - Students should be allowed to bring materials out of the SALC to practice at home. Students should be allowed to bring in a notebook so that they can make short notes about what they want to further study or search for further information.
 - Participation should not be mandatory.
 - The staff should be able to explain students' problems about English use.

-Students should have the freedom to choose what they want to do in the SALC instead of being required to do FE related materials.

-Officers that are in the SALC are not helpful. It's like they don't want to talk to students.

-The teachers are too strict.

- Responses related to other aspects of the SALC

-SALC should be located at my faculty.



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Chapter Five

Discussion of Findings

In what follows, only important trends in the questionnaire data reported in the previous chapter are discussed. The subjects' responses to both closed-ended and open-ended items in the questionnaire zoom in on the trends and help raise awareness of key issues related to language learners' use of and attitudes toward the SALC, as well as other interesting findings that have derived from what the subjects had voiced in the questionnaire.

Subjects' Use of the SALC

1. Frequency of Use

Although the FE I and FE II courses required the subjects to complete at their convenience a total of ten learning materials which accounted for 5% of their final grade in the SALC, the participation of the subjects in the present study varied greatly in terms of frequency. More than half of the subjects (296 or 57.48%) used the SALC only a few times during the whole semester, whereas just 177 subjects, or a little over one-third (34.37%) visited the SALC once or twice a week on a regular basis in the previous semester. Regardless of the general trend on the use of the SALC, about 18 subjects, or 3.50%, participated in the SALC more than twice a week

during the course of their FE I study. Similar findings can be found in Yeung & Hyland (1999) who conducted an investigation of Hong Kong students' use of SALC. These Chinese learners of English were also required to work in the SALC one hour per week as part of a traditional classroom-taught business English course. At the end of the semester, the researchers found that despite the students' acceptance that the participation in the SALC assisted their language development, nearly half of them were not certain if they would want to do activities in the SALC again in the following semester due to various reasons. Perhaps a qualitative analysis involving an in-depth interview is required to yield insights particularly on why these learners of English have certain reservations about developing their English proficiency autonomously in the SALC.

When it comes to working in the SALC, one surprising discovery was that although participation in the SALC was required, as many as 23 subjects, or 4.47% of them, reported that they had never used the SALC at all in the semester before. In fact, this is possible as the teachers did not have to be present in the SALC while the students were working. As a result, the students might have asked their friends to copy the answers of their learning materials on to their folder kept in the SALC so that when the teachers came to check the completion of

their work at the end of the semester, they would have all the records needed for the teachers to score. Again, further research is deemed necessary to discover the reasons why some students do not comply with the SALC requirement. For instance, a descriptive study may be needed to obtain these students' attitudes toward and motivation in learning English in general and using the SALC in particular. A correlational study may also be needed to see how their lack of participation is related to their English language achievement. If the findings of a correlational study confirm that there is a positive correlation between learning achievement and actual participation in the SALC, teachers may have more evidence to convince these learners to realize the significance of their self-access language learning and more desirable rate of SALC participation may be achieved.

2. Reasons for Use or Lack of Use of SALC

When asked for the reasons why they visited the SALC, more than half of the subjects, or 67.38%, responded that they did so only because they were told to go there by their respective FE I teachers. Only a little lower than one-third, or 31.46%, reported that they worked in the SALC because they had decided to improve their English on their own. The main reasons for

the establishment and existence of the SALC was to enable language learners to practice various language skills of their own accord, and the subjects' responses to this particular item in the questionnaire suggests that we are probably still far from achieving this purpose.

An open-ended question included in the questionnaire asked the subjects for the reasons why they did not attend the SALC on a regular basis, and the subjects could give more than one answer. This format was used in the hope that all the possible answers could be generated by the subjects.

Two hundred subjects, or 38.83%, stated that they were simply too busy studying for other subject matters, so they had no time for extra independent language practice. This finding was one more time in congruence with the findings of Yeung & Hyland (1999) who found that the most important obstacle that prevented the ESL learners in Hong Kong from developing their language skills in the SALC was lack of time. In addition to this, the second largest group of subjects, or 17.80%, frankly admitted that they were just plain lazy. Other interesting responses regarding the reasons hindering the subjects from making use of the SALC included the following: the location of the SALC was too far away from their faculty (6.04%), the materials were ineffective or too boring in their opinion (3.90%), and they did not

know how to use the SLAC well enough to learn effectively by themselves (2.14%). A small number of subjects also gave other reasons such as having no interest in the English language, not finding the environment in the SALC comfortable enough (too crowded, too cold, or too quiet), or needing to spend time doing something else with their friends such as going shopping or having fun.

Evidently enough, these findings shed light on the issue of motivation on part of the language learners. According to Ellis (1994), there is a widespread recognition that motivation is of great importance for successful language learning as it affects the extent to which language learners persevere in learning and practicing the target language. Also, learners' motivation can be expected to have a causal effect on the quantity and quality of the learning strategies they employ. The strength of influence that motivation has on learning strategies was shown in the study of Oxford & Nyikos (1989). They conducted a study on students of foreign languages in the United States and discovered that "the degree of expressed motivation was the single most powerful influence on the choice of language learning strategy" (p. 294).

The findings of the above studies clearly indicate that teachers need to find way to increase language learners' motivation, especially intrinsic motivation, in

learning English so that they, as motivated learners, are more likely to put their efforts on seeking ways to become *able* users of the language and try to become more autonomous learners who make use of the opportunity to better themselves independently in the SALC. This is evidenced in the research of Detaramani & Chan (1999) which revealed that the students who participated in the SALC more often had not only a more positive attitude but also a higher level of intrinsic motivation to master the target language.

Subject's Attitudes toward the SALC

1. Usefulness of the SALC

The subjects' attitudes toward their participation in the SALC were predominantly positive. Close to three-quarters, or 72.23%, of the subjects reported that working in the SALC was either "rather" or "very" useful for their learning of English. Only approximately one-fourth, or 23.50%, of the subjects found the SALC was "somewhat" useful to their language development, and a mere 2.91% of them, or only 5 out of 515 subjects, found their experience working in the SALC "not useful at all" to their language learning.

These particular findings support those of Cotterall & Reinders (2000) who found that almost 90% of the students enrolled in an intensive English proficiency

course at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, found their participation in the SALC either "quite" or "very" useful for their language development. They further conducted a correlational analysis of the relationship between learners' perceptions of working in the SALC and the frequency of their visits there, and the statistical analysis suggested that learners who considered learning independently in the SALC to be useful tended to use it more often.

An assumption that awareness in the significance and usefulness of the SALC would lead to an increase in participation can then be made. In fact, it has been reflected in the notion of "metalingual strategies" proposed by O'Malley and Chamot (1990). The argument of the term is that successful learners are thoughtful and aware of themselves in relation to the learning process. To explain further, they take conscious decisions and they follow their own preferred learning style.

For the reasons above, if teachers can devise ways to raise the learners' awareness of the significance and usefulness of working independently in the SALC, it may not then be too high an expectation to see a higher rate of participation in the SALC.

2. Preferred Learning Materials

Apart from the required LMs, of the resources provided in the SALC, the listening materials (including tapes and video movies) proved the most popular as the largest group of subjects, or 28.66%, said they liked these materials most. In addition, 8.38% of the subjects indicated that they liked to work on various grammar activities such as communicative grammar tasks, and 5.07% reported that they liked to use the computer facilities provided for them to search for information on the Internet. Only 4.43% of the subjects reported that they liked to use the reading materials.

It is noteworthy that, like the subjects in the studies conducted by Yang (1999) and Cotterall & Reinders (2000), the subjects in the present research indicated that they wanted to see more of the listening and speaking activities in the SALC. It is deemed imperative, therefore, that teachers find out the reasons underlying such preferences. It may be the case that these students feel they have an immediate need to improve their listening skills more than other language skills. Besides, it may also be possible that the subjects may find listening materials such as videos, DVDs, and others relatively more costly and less readily available when compared to reading materials. An alternative interpretation of their preference for tapes

and video movies can be just as basic as they find these materials more enjoyable and suitable for their learning needs. Further studies should take these issues of interest into account to determine the root cause(s) why language learners place an emphasis on this particular skill, the listening skill, and have preference for audio-visual materials so that more appropriate language instruction and provision of materials can be arranged accordingly.

3. Perceived effectiveness of the SALC in language development and effectiveness of SALC as course requirement

The subjects were also asked to state their attitudes toward working in the SALC and how much it helped them to improve their English language skills. Close to half of the subjects, or 44.27%, believed that working in the SALC helped improve their English "just a little bit," while 37.48% felt that the experience helped "a lot." However, there were some subjects (4.66%) who believed that their participation in the SALC was not helpful to their English language development at all, while 7.96% had no idea whether working in the SALC played any role in assisting their language improvement or not.

As regards the necessity of SALC as a course requirement, when asked if they believed that it was necessary for the FE courses to include working in the SALC as part of the course requirements, the largest group of subjects, or 43.11%, believed it was necessary, followed by those who thought that it was necessary "just a little bit," "not necessary at all," and "not having any idea," which accounted for 34.76%, 8.16%, and 7.77% of the responses, respectively.

These findings clearly suggest the need to find out how learners perceive self-access language learning and independent participation in the SALC. It is crucial for teachers and curriculum developers to have a clear understanding on these issues before they attempt to introduce a SALC to their learners (See Gardner & Miller, 1999; Cotterall, 1999; Cotterall & Reinders, 2000).

The perceived effectiveness of the SALC is, nonetheless, influenced by contextually specific factors. The term 'context' here may, in the broadest sense, refer to cultures and individual learners. With respect to cultures, Ho & Crookall (1995) have suggested, some learners, especially those with Asian ethnic origins, may not find the idea of independent learning appealing because of the deeply-rooted respect for, and dependence on, the elders and the superior underlying their cultural value.

The consequences of such traditions are that some students may believe learning can only take place with the presence of the teachers and eventually lose their appreciation of the benefits of self-access learning. Furthermore, these students may not know how they can benefit from their independent work in the SALC. These could be translated into less practice in the facility. As such, the perceived effectiveness of the SALC on the improvement of language proficiency is, in many cultures, merely linked to the value and practice associated with them, rather than a true reflection of learners' perception on the participation in the venue.

In addition to cultural factors, variables pertaining to individual learners have an impact on their perceived effectiveness of the SALC on the development of language skills. One of the variables is their current state of language proficiency. It was found that some of the more advanced learners may consider working in the SALC a task appropriate only to students with lower level of ability who need extra help, hence their disregard to SALC (Cotterall and Reinders, 2000—see above). For these reasons, the learners' beliefs about self-access language learning and SALC should be thoroughly explored before an introduction is made.

Other Findings

There were other findings which may help the administrators of the Institute better manage the SALC as well as teachers to more efficiently and effectively provide assistance to the learners who could indeed tremendously benefit from their engagement in the SALC.

1. Instruction on SALC Use

All FE I students were given explanations on how to use the SALC by their respective teachers at the beginning of the semester so as to prepare them to work in the SALC on their own. When asked whether the subjects found their teacher's explanation helpful, a little more than one-third, or 38.45%, indicated that the explanation was "rather helpful," approximately one-third, or 33.40%, said it was "somewhat helpful," and 18.25% stated it was "very helpful." Just 22 subjects, or 4.27% of the total, found that the teacher's explanation given to them was not helpful at all in enabling them to work in the SALC without experiencing too much trouble.

Introducing self-access learning and hoping for instant learner autonomy to evolve may be too miraculous a result to expect. Initially, teachers may need to work harder to familiarize the students with the ideas that they themselves can take charge of their learning. Besides, as role change cannot be expected to take place

in a swift instance, teachers may need to make extra effort to introduce to the students the rationale behind the use of SALC as well as the fruitful results the students can reap.

The above points lead to questions and possible responses on issues broader than instruction on SALC use. First, is it possible that the present curriculum requiring the students to take part in the SALC for their term grades could only extrinsically motivate the students in so-doing? The response to the question based on the findings of the present study is 'highly possible,' if not 'absolutely,' as the majority of the subjects indicated that they participated in self-learning activities because they had been instructed by their teachers and, of course, the participation was part of the evaluation made against them.

The second question is if it is possible that the FEI teachers made their instruction based on extrinsic motivations; that is, they tended to focus the significance of participation in the SALC on the scores the students would receive rather than the personal benefit, be it linguistically-related or intellectually-concerned. The response made is a 'reserved' yes. It is so because the teachers are responsible for their role as teachers on various requirements of which the most critical one is, perhaps, their part in the students'

academic performance reflected by their term grades. Those whose students did not perform well would be questioned about their teaching ability. Thus, their teaching and instruction are likely to be oriented toward evaluation and assessment instead of language development, which is definitely more desirable.

The two questions and responses to them reflect that motivation on the use of the SALC tends to be extrinsic to the teachers and the students alike. This highlights the need for a move away from providing the students with extrinsic motivations to intrinsic ones as, according to Skehan (1989), intrinsic motivation is more influential than its extrinsic counterpart. Two interrelated steps that may help foster intrinsic motivation on the use of SALC on the part of the students are through assessing their learning needs, and preparing and delivering the teachers' instruction to correspond with those needs, if possible, on an individual basis.

2. Locating the Needed SALC Materials

Working independently in the SALC means that after having received explanation and guidance from their teachers on how to work on their own in the SALC, the students, with minimal assistance from the teachers and the

facility to explore and make decisions about the materials on which they want to practice.

When asked about any difficulty the subjects might have had trying to locate the resources they needed in the center, close to half of the subjects, or 44.58%, found it was "somewhat difficult" to find the materials they wanted, while another rather large percentage of them, or 33.40%, found the experience "rather difficult." A small percentage, or 6.21%, found that trying to find what they wanted was "very difficult" in the SALC. On the other hand, it may be delightful to know that 10.49% of the total number of subjects experienced no difficulty at all when they wanted to locate the materials they were looking for.

In Sheerin (1989), a proposal is offered on an *ideal* organization of learning materials in a SALC. The venue—of course subject to the available time, space and financial resources—can be designed to consist of a library section and a self-access section. The library section can be further classified into different sections such as reference, reading, non-fiction reading, newspapers and magazines, and EFL. The self-access section can be organized into sections on different skills such as reading, listening, writing, speaking, grammar, vocabulary, and social English.

Although categorizing materials into different sections will make it easier for the students to locate the materials needed, it may not be sufficient, particularly when the students are new to the institution and the SALC staff are busy working on other matters with less time allocated for helping the students in their search for materials. A SALC tour and a learner training guided by the teachers during the very beginning of the FE I classes may be helpful in these circumstances.

3. Helpfulness of SALC staff

The staff in the SALC were instructed to help the students who needed advice or assistance in the use of the resources provided. The largest group of subjects, or 40.19%, found the SALC staff "somewhat helpful," one-quarter "rather helpful," and 8.54% "very helpful." It was worth noticing that as many as 102 subjects, or 20.00%, found that the staff on hand was not helpful at all. These findings, coupled with the qualitative findings regarding what the subjects wanted to see more in the SALC as "a smile on the face of the staff," definitely highlight the necessity of improving the management and services offered in the SALC which could lead to more frequent SALC use on the part of language learners.

For instance, staff may need to undergo training about the nature and special characteristics of the SALC. One subject's response that a staff member did not allow them to make any noise while working may be a good indication that staff somehow still lacked understanding of the differences between a library where quietness and lack of disturbance is of paramount importance and the SALC where students should be allowed to work either quietly by themselves or by engaging in a pair or group discussion with their peers. Cotterall & Reinders (2000) also point out the necessity of staff training. They suggest that in addition to helping students locate the materials they ask for or giving the advice they need, SALC staff members should also be able to offer other forms of support including encouraging learner who lack motivation, helping select materials to address learners' specific language needs, and providing instruction on how to use computer-based programs.

The points made by Cotterall & Reinders imply that, in addition to changes in the role of the teachers and learners for successful autonomous learning to develop, that of the staff should also be transformed. Currently, they may be seen as passive service providers assisting the students in locating the resources they need, giving information about the rules and use of the SALC, and the likes. Their new roles should be more active ones. For

instance, they should take part in decision-making processes; are kept informed and, in turn, inform the parties involved about the students' needs, which will help the teachers and administrators to make more *informed* decisions about issues related to the *actual* practice of learner autonomy; notify learning problems they see countered by the students as they are the persons on the site; and, as suggested by Cotterall & Reinders, play a more facilitative and supportive role in promoting the learner autonomy, to name a number of things. Moreover, their roles should be linked to those of the teachers, students, and administrators so that all people are directing toward the same desired end.

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Chapter Six

Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary of the Findings

The present research reports on the students' use of the SALC in terms of frequency of use, and reasons for use or lack of use; their attitudes toward the SALC with respect to its usefulness, their preferred learning materials, the perceived effectiveness of the SALC in improving language proficiency; and their attitudes toward the inclusion of SALC participation in the course requirements; and findings related to instruction on SALC use, ease of locating the resources needed, and helpfulness of the SALC staff.

1. Use of the SALC

It was found that the majority of the students made use of the SALC only a few times during the whole semester while a substantially less number of the students used the SALC regularly about once or twice a week throughout the semester. The least number of the students made it to use the venue more frequently than twice a week. The percentage of the students reporting themselves as completely not using the facility was almost equal to that in the previous group.

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Use
of SALC

The most frequently responded reason for use of the SALC was the instruction by the teacher. Slightly less than half as many students as those in the previous group reported that they wanted to improve their proficiency. More than one-third of the students who never made it to use the SALC at all stated that they had been busy and unable to take part in the SALC activities. The second most frequently given answer was that the subject students were lazy. Other responses to the reasons of not using the SALC included the distant location of the venue, the quality and attractiveness of the materials provided, and the students' lack of knowledge on how to use the facility effectively.

2. The Students' Attitudes toward Use of the SALC

The highest percentage of the students indicated that working in the SALC was rather useful or very useful to them whereas approximately one-fourth found the activity somewhat useful. Only a few students responded that the facility was not useful at all.

Among the students who made use of the SALC, the majority voted listening materials as most preferred materials. A much less number of students claimed that they liked other types of materials or equipment such as grammar activities and computer facilities.

The highest proportion of the students stated that working in the SALC helped improve their English just a little bit. The second highest, with the number that was quite close to that of the largest group, reported that they had improved a lot from SALC use. A few students, however, claimed that their English language proficiency had not been improved to any extent.

The most frequently stated feeling about the inclusion of SALC participation in the course requirements was it was necessary with a substantially less number of students feeling that it was a little bit necessary and not necessary at all.

3. Other Findings

The highest percentage of the students felt their teachers' instruction rather helpful, followed by those reporting that it was somewhat helpful, very helpful, and not helpful at all, respectively.

The majority of the students participating in SALC activities stated that locating the resources they needed was somewhat difficult, while one-third of the total number of students found it rather difficult. These were followed by those reporting that they had no difficulty at all.

Most of the students rated the SALC staff as somewhat helpful, while a quarter rated them as rather

helpful. It was found that only a slight number of the students had an impression that the staff were very helpful and almost a quarter of them found the staff not helpful at all.

Limitations of the Present Research

1. The subjects in the present research were selected by means of convenience sampling, instead of random sampling. Thus, even though the findings have shed insightful information about the sample, they cannot be generalized to a larger group of population.

2. The instrument used in this study, a self-administered survey questionnaire, was written in English in keeping with the original designed by Cotterall (2000). Even though two experts had been asked to confirm language appropriateness with FE II students' language proficiency taken into consideration, there may have been a language barrier that prevented some of the subjects from fully comprehending the questions included in the questionnaire.

Implications of the Findings

In this section, the implications of the research findings are presented. The implications are divided into two parts—those for the language teachers and those for SALC administrators and/or managers.

Implications for language teachers

First and foremost, having language learners work independently in the SALC inevitably means role adjustment not only on the part of the language learners but also on the part of teachers themselves. After having grown accustomed to, and probably been contented with, the so-called "spoon-feeding" method traditionally used by teachers, language learners may be perplexed, disoriented, or confused about what is expected of their participation in the SALC. Besides, Detaramani & Chan (1999) conducted a research study and discovered that language learners in South East Asia are very dependent on their teachers and prefer teachers to guide them to learn English. For this reason alone, learners may need extra detailed explanation and close supervision and guidance from their teacher.

In addition, teachers also have to adjust their role to suit learners' special needs in the SALC. Yang (1998) contends that teachers have a very important role in helping language learners to understand language learning strategies so that they can better direct their own language learning. In so doing, instead of directly feeding the learners with knowledge and information the teachers assume learners need, they have to transform themselves into helpers, facilitators, and consultants so

that their students can work independently with more confidence, with only minimal assistance and without direct instruction from teachers, in the SALC. To put it another way, Cotterall (1998) summarizes that important roles of teachers whose students are involved with SALC materials include familiarizing students with learning resources and raising their awareness of a variety of approaches to learning.

As revealed in the present study, many students will go to a SALC only because they are required to do so by their teachers, while others are willing to go to a great length to participate in the SALC. As a consequence, teachers need to find ways to increase their students' motivation to learn and develop their language skills independently. Detaramani & Chan (1999) suggest that probably the best way of doing this is to encourage learners to develop *intrinsic* motivation so that they will use the SALC more frequently.

With regard to motivation, as discussed in the previous section, the teachers and students should both develop the sense of *intrinsic* motivation because, perhaps, the motivation of the teachers will eventually turn into that of the students. It has already been suggested in the previous chapter that the teachers should place their emphases in terms of motivation on an individual basis and change their approach from

assessment orientation to personal development orientation. However, these are subject to time, institutional, and professional constraints that should be addressed by both teachers and the administrators involved.

Knowing their students' intrinsic motivation, the teachers are then the persons who will best give recommendations on the collection and presentation of materials to satisfy the needs of their students. Through this view could a link between the teachers' efforts and those of the SALC organizers be created and *informed* choices on the part of the administrators be done. In other words, it is more often than not the case that the teachers and the SALC administrators and operators work in isolation from one another, and there is inevitably an invisible gap in their endeavor to promote learner autonomy. Thus, bridging such efforts at the very beginning will close this gap. Efforts are then made more collaborated, and promoting autonomous learning can be more highly hoped.

It is also worth noting that the present study found a number of students left unsatisfied with how they were introduced to using SALC by their teachers at the beginning of the semester. It is suggested, therefore, that teachers should make sure that they provide sufficient guidance to their students which leave them

self-assured that they can work by themselves in the SALC with the least possible trouble. This does not mean, however, that the students can be left totally on their own while in the SALC. Instead, teachers should be available to offer counseling and assistance when and as needed. This follows the suggestions of Yeung & Hyland (1999) who caution that some students may need more guidance than others in making informed choices in the SALC as they may lack a clear understanding not only of their own specific problem areas but also of how to monitor their progress.

Furthermore, teachers should train learners on how to learn independently in the SALC. One way of doing so is through learning activities. According to Lee (1998), learner-training helps learners become more aware of the learning process and more ready to take charge of their own learning, replacing ineffective strategies with more effective ones. Lee further suggests that such training can be of particular benefits to 'lazy' learners whose self-confidence and self-esteem needs to be boosted. Such students need to be made to believe that they too can be successful language learners. Otherwise, self-directed learning may not be achieved.

Another thing teachers can do to promote learners' use of the SALC is providing them with strategy training. According to Oxford (1990), learners need to learn how to

learn, and teachers need to learn how to facilitate the process of learning, stating that "although learning is certainly part of the human condition, conscious [emphasis original] skill in self-directed learning and in strategy use must be sharpened through training" p. 201). She further explains that learning strategy training can be done with the goal to help make language learning more meaningful, to encourage a collaborative spirit between learner and teacher, to learn about options for language learning, and to learn and practice strategies that facilitate self-reliance. With such a belief, teachers can gradually raise learners' awareness of and familiarization with not only 'how' but also 'why' they should work in the SALC to develop their English.

Besides learner training and strategy training, teachers can encourage students to engage in SALC use more effectively by designing language courses which promote learner autonomy. This can be done by incorporating means of transferring responsibility for aspects of the language learning process (such as setting goals, selecting learning strategies, and evaluating progress) from the teacher to learners (Cotterall, 2000).

For example, teachers may determine the general theme of lessons but instead of designing and preparing all the materials needed for classroom instruction, they can ask learners to be responsible for material

selection, although they may like to set the balance between commercial and authentic materials. Among other benefits, according to Kilickaya (2004), authentic texts have a positive effect on learner motivation and they tend to relate more closely to learners' language needs. Also, learners may be assigned to come up with activities such as group discussions or role-plays for the materials they have selected. Having learners work cooperatively in group helps reinforce language acquisition since their knowledge and understanding increases when they give information or explanation to teammates (Olsen & Kagan, 1992). In other words, explaining ideas to peers enhances understanding, especially when it requires elaborate explanations instead of terminal responses like short answers, or cognitive elaborative work such as organizing thoughts and being certain about a concept.

Thus, regardless of the types, components, and characteristics of the activities selected, it is undeniable that in doing so the responsibility of planning lessons will be shifted from teachers to learners, helping them to take more charge of their own learning process.

Finally, in terms of assessment, when working in the SALC, learners should be encouraged to become more independent. Although they are working with resources that may encourage them to take responsibility for their

own learning, they may not always have the means to assess how well they are doing. For every self-access learning opportunity that is offered, therefore, a self-assessment opportunity should also be available (Gardner, 1996). Not only should materials allow learners to practice and develop their language skills independently, but they should also provide appropriate assessment methods which might consist of paper and pencil or machine-based materials. When such assessment methods are offered, learners are provided with the opportunity to learn about and judge their own performance. It is then anticipated that those who are not content with their performance will try harder to improve their language proficiency.

Implications for SALC Administrators/Managers

It is of great significance that persons in charge of setting up self-access centers consider the needs, objectives, interests, and motivations of the potential users before ordering equipment and selecting materials (Sheerin, 1991). Thus, a survey of language learners' needs is deemed necessary if the manager and/or administrator would like to arrange the SALC in ways that most benefit learners.

For instance, in the present study, the subjects indicated that they would like to see more listening and

speaking added into the SALC, both in terms of number and variety. Although there are a number of video and DVD movies for Chulalongkorn University students to work on, the subjects asserted that they would like to have some musical cassette tapes or compact discs in the SALC so that they can learn the lyrics of songs in English while practice listening. Further, like the Hong Kong subjects in Detaramani & Chan's (1999) study, some subjects suggested that they would like to engage themselves in speaking activities in the SALC.

As a result, those who are responsible for preparing materials in the SALC should consider a range of things learners might do to better their speaking ability there. In fact, teachers should be consulted when learning materials and resources are selected for any SALC since they will be able to suggest materials suitable to students they teach in terms of both background knowledge and interests as well as their current level of language proficiency.

It is also important that counselors in charge of self-access centers should consider factors such as learners' abilities and perceived language needs as they affect autonomous learning behavior when selecting materials.

For these reasons, if the self-access learning centers are set up without taking language learners'

personal interests, their levels of proficiency, and their language learning needs into careful and thorough consideration, it will be difficult to encourage learners to use these centers as learners will not find them so motivating or of much use in improving their English.

Finally, all staff posted in any SALC to provide assistance to learners should be equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to help facilitate learners' autonomous language learning there. In this study, some of the subjects indicated that they found the SALC staff unhelpful to a certain extent. It could be the case that some staff members still have a misconception that SALC is like a library where service users are expected to work independently in peace and quietness. In fact, apart from working individually, language learners working in the SALC are expected to engage in group discussions or join in other activities with their peers, which can lead to making noises. It is very likely that where staff lack such knowledge, understanding, and skills as in the present study, SALC users will find them unhelpful and they may be turned off. Consequently, those who are in charge of SALC management should organize training sessions that enable staff members to be of value and significant assistance to learners. Only then will language learners be able to find their experience in the SALC more fulfilling, again

being encouraged to come back and use the SALC more for their own good.

A Final Remark

The suggestions made on the collaboration between the teachers and SALS administrators lead the researcher to propose that a more effective approach toward making autonomous learning and the use of SALC to achieve the goal is to promote a partnership in teaching, learning and organizing. This means the needs of the parties involved e.g. the teachers, the learners, the SALC administrators and staff should be taken into account in *relation* to, rather than in isolation of, one another. If possible, they should be made involved and to have their voice in making decisions on, for example, the role and degree of autonomy to be expected in their environment, the path to creating autonomy, the role and responsibilities they are willing to accept in achieving the goal of autonomous learning. Their idea, opinions, attitudes and stance on related issues should be valued and analyzed provided the existing limitations. Constraints should, however, be not treated as obstructing the efforts in establishing the partnership but, instead, as a factor in helping them to opt for a realistically negotiated solution. To conclude, by engaging all parties in as many concerns and processes

possible, a sense of ownership develops and more can be expected from the endeavor made on learner autonomy.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the findings of the present study, it is recommended that future research be conducted to investigate the link learners make between their participation in SALC and both their in-class and out-of-class language learning in the following areas:

1. Correlational research should be carried out to investigate the relationships between learner factors such as levels of target language proficiency, major areas of study, and personal interest and their attitudes toward, belief about, and practice in the SALC to see whether such relationships exist or not. This is because researchers and scholars have pointed out that individual factors play a prominent role in learners' language learning (Krashen, 1981). The findings of such correlational research would be interesting because if the findings confirm that statistically significant relationships do exist, teachers and SALC administrators would be better equipped with knowledge and understanding that would enable them to select the resources and prepare the tasks that will more appropriately suit language learners' individual factors. It is hoped that

these language learners will then be encouraged to make more use of the SALC for their own benefits.

2. Survey research should be conducted to further explore language learners' beliefs about and attitudes toward self-access language learning. According to Cotterall (1999), learners approach the task of learning a language in different ways according to individual characteristics including the beliefs they hold about language learning. Moreover, Wasanasomsithi (2000) points out that different learners have different learning style preferences. Some may be auditory learners, while other may prefer visual learning. Also, some learners may prefer to work on their own, whereas others find that working with other students in group is more rewarding for their learning.

Hence, if teachers are equipped with much needed awareness of different learner types, they will be able to better arrange both classroom instruction and guidance of learners' participation in SALCs to accommodate different needs of different learners. For example, learners who believe that learning can only take place in the presence of teachers may need explanation from the teachers about the benefits they can gain from independent learning, while those who prefer working in a group may need guidance on how independent practice in the SALC can speed up their mastery of the target

language. In addition, the identification of learners' beliefs and learning style preferences might also reflect the nature of self-directed learning and autonomous language learning behavior. Again, with such reflection, teachers should be better able to satisfy language learners' needs.

3. Qualitative studies which include observation of learners while engaging themselves with activities in the SALC should be carried out to shed light on the actual behaviors of the learners. According to Merriam (2001), observation is the best technique to use when an activity, event, or situation can be observed first-hand and when a fresh perspective is desired. Further, in-depth interviews should be conducted to gather detailed, insightful information regarding learners' other out-of-class language learning activities so that teachers can incorporate classroom activities which support and encourage both participation in their SALC and the learners' development of English outside classes. For instance, teachers may supplement their classroom lessons with independent student research in the SALC coupled with individual projects to be carried out by learners outside of the class.

By so-doings, students will be provided with opportunity to realize that learning can also take place outside the classroom and without direct and explicit

instruction from their teachers. Also, they may come to a realization that the language learning experiences they seek out for themselves on their own freewill may be even more fun and worthwhile to their development of the target language than their classroom language learning experience itself.

Conclusions

The goal of all education is to help people to think, act, and learn independently in relevant areas of their lives. Self-access learning has become an important part of language learning. In striving to become able and fluent users of the English language, many learners find their participation in the SALC a useful complement to what they are doing in class or as an alternative to formal lessons.

The findings of the present study have highlighted a range of issues related to learners' use of and attitudes toward the SALC. The challenge for teachers is, then, to find ways of encouraging individual learners to make the most of their SALC participation. Learners need to do this in ways they see as beneficial to their development and at their own pace so that they are not only motivated but also eventually equipped with the tools they need, to pave the pathway to the ultimate goal of achieving language learning autonomy.

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APPENDIX

Survey Questionnaire of Self-Access Learning Center Use

Hi, everyone.

This questionnaire is to find out what you think about the Self-Access Learning Center (SALC) and about how you use them. This information will help us improve the facilities provided to you in the future. IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH YOUR FE CLASSES. Don't worry. You don't have to tell us who you are, so the information you provide will not affect you or your FE grade in anyway! Thank you in advance for your help. (You can answer in Thai.)

Faculty: _____

FE I Grade: _____

1. Which of the Self-Access Learning Center (SALC) did you use?
 - the SALC at Prem Purachattra Building
 - the SALC at my faculty or the Central Library

2. How often did you use the SALC in the last semester?
 - usually more than twice a week
 - usually once or twice a week
 - only a few times during the whole semester
 - never

3. You went to the SALC mainly because
 - My teachers told me to.
 - I decided to go to the SALC myself to improve my English.

4. Could you tell us why you did not use the SALC more often?

Because _____

5. How useful do you think working in the SALC is to learning English?

- very useful
- rather useful
- somewhat useful
- not useful at all

6. What do you like most about the SALC?

7. What materials would you like to see more of in the SALC?

8. What is the most difficult thing for you about working in the SALC?

9. Do you think that you FE I teacher's explanation of how to use the SALC at the beginning of the semester helpful for you?

- very helpful
- rather helpful
- somewhat helpful
- not helpful at all

10. How helpful was the staff in the SALC who helped you and gave you advice?
- very helpful
 - rather helpful
 - somewhat helpful
 - not helpful at all
11. How difficult was it for you to find the materials you wanted in the SALC?
- very helpful
 - rather helpful
 - somewhat helpful
 - not helpful at all
12. Do you think that working in the SALC has helped you to improve your English?
- Yes, it helps a lot
 - Just a little bit
 - No, it does not help at all
 - I don't know
13. Do you think that it is necessary for FE courses to require you to work in the SALC?
- Yes, it is very necessary
 - Just a little bit
 - No, it is not necessary at all
 - I don't know
14. Any other comments or suggestions for us?

Thanks again for your help!