THE EFFECT OF ONLINE JOURNAL WRITING:
LEARNER AUTONOMY IN STUDENT TEACHERS OF THE
MA-ELT PROGRAM AT ASSUMPTION UNIVERSITY, THAILAND

AYE WAI WAI

A THESIS SUBMITTED
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING
MA-ELT

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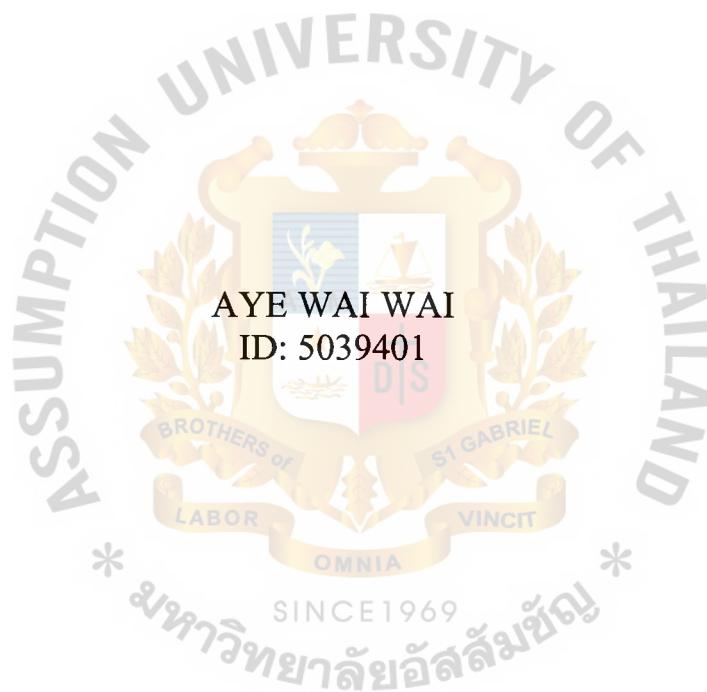
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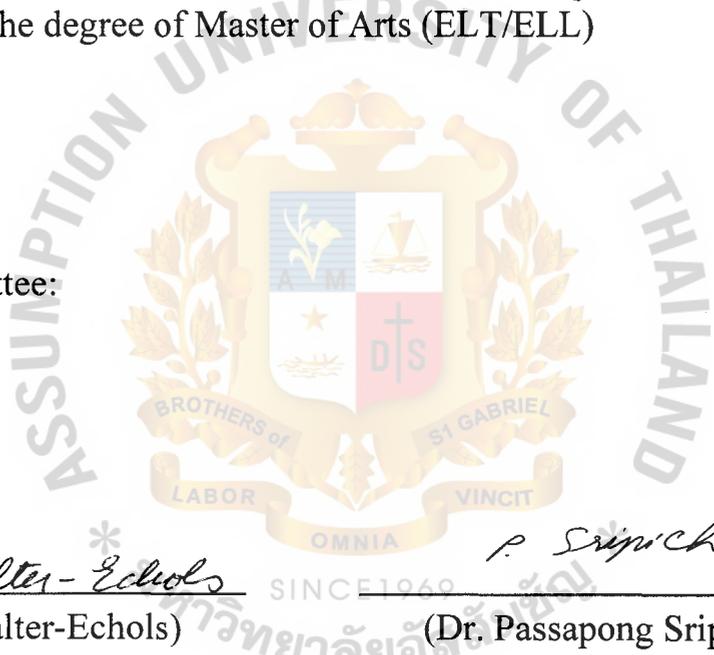
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PLAGIARISM STATEMENT

I certify that all the material in this study which is not my own work has been identified and acknowledged, and that no materials are included for which a degree has already been conferred upon me.

Aye Wai Wai

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ABSTRACT

The learning experience of teachers has a great impact on the way they teach their students. This is because teachers are likely to teach the way they have experienced the instruction process as students. Teachers who have been taught with a traditional approach can be expected to teach their students in a similar way..

Autonomous learning, or the aspect of learning in which learners take major control over their own instructional development, is now playing an important role in education. The teacher plays an important role in fostering learner autonomy in the classroom. In order to do this effectively, however, teachers should have experience of autonomous learning in their teacher education course. Journal writing is regarded as one of the tasks that promote autonomous learning. This research study investigates the autonomous characteristics and the perspectives related to autonomy which prevail when student teachers write online journals in a writing course in an MA-ELT program. The journals were written in the form of a weblog (or blog) in which all the members could see each others' journals and give comments on them.

The analysis of the data proceeds in three stages. First, two sets of journals written by 23 student teachers were analyzed in order to identify their autonomous behaviors as a group. Secondly, a questionnaire was sent to all of these student teachers to find out their perceptions on the writing of online journals. 18 out of 23 participants ultimately replied to the questionnaire and thus participated to fulfill this stage of the research. Finally, the individual cases of five participants selected for their different personal and educational factors were studied to discover their autonomous behaviors and perceptions about online journal writing.

The autonomous characteristics of the participants were analyzed from the three different dimensions: *metacognitive, affective* and *social.* The results showed that learner autonomy is seen in all participants, although it is shown in different forms and to

different degrees. The answers to the questionnaire were analyzed according to the participants' positive and negative attitudes on the experience of online journaling. Most of them had positive attitudes about the online journal and believed that it helped them to become autonomous learners. A few of them, though, expressed a negative reaction to the relationship between online journal writing and autonomous learning. Because of the unique characteristics of each learner, different forms of autonomous characteristics and perceptions on online journal writing are found in the writings of the five selected individual participants. The results suggest, nevertheless, that since the participants have all studied in an autonomous learning environment and show autonomous behaviors as learners and future teachers, they are likely, in turn, to create an autonomous learning environment and foster learner autonomy in their own future students.

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INTRODUCTION

1.1   Introduction

This study describes online journals written by student teachers in a required writing course in the fourth trimester of the MA-ELT program at Assumption University in Thailand and the relationship between these online journals and learner autonomy. The student teachers wrote their journal entries every week, posted them online using a weblog and gave comments on each others' journals. This created an environment for the student teachers to develop a closer personal relationship with each other as individuals and to grow professionally as teachers.

Today's educational philosophy emphasizes life-long learning, for which autonomous learning is a pre-requisite. Language teachers and researchers are finding ways to help language learners to take responsibility for their own learning, and this is what is known as autonomous learning. In order to help their future students to become autonomous learners, however, teachers should have experienced what it means to be autonomous learners themselves.

The study analyzes the weekly journals of the student teachers of the MA-ELT program. It investigates in what way online journal writing may lead to learner autonomy, and whether through this experience they may become more aware of the ways to help their students to become autonomous learners, too.

1.2   Background of study

Journal writing is used in many formal education programs such as linguistics, science, mathematics, psychology, and ethnography, among others. The concept of journal writing is based on diary writing, or the keeping of a personal reflective record. Although in an educational context the definitions of 'journal', 'diary' and

'logs' are differentiated, in reality these genres are often conflated and used interchangeably in the literature of language teaching research. Depending on individual or course requirements, different types of journals have been used in language learning and teaching, such as reflective journals, reading journals, learning journals, dialogue journals and teaching journals (Burton and Carroll 2001a; Staton 1991; Peyton 1993). In addition, journals are being used in language teacher education especially for the professional development of pre-service and in-service teachers (Porter et al. 1996; Dalogu 2001; Chen 2008; Thonus 2001). Some of them are personal journals kept privately, and some are interactive journals linking student to student, or student to teacher. In recent decades, with the emergence of the computer and Internet, journals are written in the form of e-mail and weblogs (blogs), which give learners and teachers opportunity to interact with each other in their own time and space (Lor 1998; Alm 2009). Journals have also been widely used in educational research as a source of data and a tool for investigation of the learning process (Bailey 1996; McDonough and McDonough 1997).

The stimulation for the present study was the researcher's own experience of journal writing practice in the courses she took in the MA-ELT program at Assumption University. Having been educated in a purely traditional classroom for eleven years at school and four years at university, the researcher's discovery of learner-centered pedagogy was a source of inspiration for her as a graduate student. She discovered that in her very first graduate course, where she wrote a weekly dialogue journal and received regular feedback from her teacher, her motivation to write in English and the ease with which she did it greatly increased. Then, in her teaching practicum course, she found the same improvement in fluency of writing in her students' journals. In the 'Theory and Practice of Writing' course, a required

M.A. course for her group, the researcher and her classmates wrote weekly journals and posted them online. This situation created an environment of collaborative learning, since the writers not only expressed their own thoughts and ideas, but gave responses and support to each others' postings. The researcher was impressed by this practice of journaling, which gave her the chance to reflect on her own learning, to share her knowledge and experiences and also to become aware of her classmates' differing knowledge and experiences.

In addition, the research about journal writing stimulated the researcher to explore how journal writing gives benefits to language learners and teachers. Burton and Carroll's research (2000a: 1-7) draws the conclusion that journal writing acts as an aid to self-awareness, autonomy and collaborative learning. This finding was a new insight to the researcher, prompting her to investigate the effect of online journal writing and its relation to learner autonomy.

1.3   Rationale of the study

In the field of language education, teachers and researchers have become aware of individual learner differences, and language teaching theories have shifted to a focus on the learner. Learners may differ as to age, language aptitude, intelligence, motivation, personality and learning style (Wenden 1991). It would be hard for language teachers to discover such differences in their limited classroom time and to provide teaching that best suits all these individual differences. Teachers are thus finding ways to help learners to learn at their own pace and according to their own personal preferences. Autonomy refers to the learners' broad approach to the learning process, rather than to a particular mode of teaching or learning (Benson 2001: 1). Therefore, if learners are autonomous in their process, their learning is likely to be more efficient and effective in helping them to attain their personal learning goals. In

addition, "when learners succeed in developing autonomy, they not only become better language learners but they also develop into more responsible and critical members of the communities in which they live" (Benson 2001: 1).

In language teaching methodology and practice, too, communicative teaching and learner-centeredness and autonomy share a focus on the learner. Autonomy is considered a desirable characteristic of learners because learning occurs not only in the classroom, but when students connect their classroom learning with their real world experience. Successful learning within the classroom environment, therefore, takes place when the learners interact with more capable and experienced peers.

Too often, teachers teach their students in the way they have been taught as students. Taylor (1990: 7) points out that "it is likely most teachers will themselves have been taught languages through a traditional approach which might then have been reinforced in their initial training as the way to teach." Thus, the teacher who has been taught conventional teaching methods is likely to teach their students in the same way. On the other hand, the teacher who has experienced an autonomous learning environment is more likely to create an environment for their students to learn autonomously. Thus it is extremely important for teachers to be exposed to innovative ideas during their training, so that they may teach in a new and more productive way. Learner autonomy is one of these productive innovations which teachers will only pass on if they have experienced it themselves.

Language teachers and teacher educators are, indeed, finding ways to promote autonomy in language learning, including through journaling. A number of researchers have observed that journal writing plays a central role in language learning and teaching practice, and leads to autonomous learning and professional development (Nunan 1997; Burton and Carroll 2001a; Porter et al. 1996). Nowlan

(2008) states that writing journals and using the Internet and technology can foster autonomous language learning. The growth of the use of technology, particularly the Internet, in education has even freed students in many parts of the world to attend classes in their own space and time, thus maximizing their learner autonomy.

Research on learner autonomy in language learning and teaching has investigated the areas of describing the components of autonomy, fostering and measuring autonomy in the classroom, and analyzing the relationship between autonomy and better language learning (Benson 2001). Lor (1998, cited in Benson 2001: 204-208) studied first-year students' experience of writing reflective journals with the use of a web-based system at the University of Hong Kong. She focused on the reflections in their journals of the out-of-class learning of these students and gave responses intended to encourage the students to continue writing, but not to influence the ways in which they wrote. It was found that most of their journal entries were neither 'well-integrated nor transformative'.

She suggested further research in the area of reflection and autonomy, where learner reflections are given in natural contexts of learning. She also suggested studying the way in which the learners reflect by analyzing their talk and writing about their learning experiences. There appears to be no published research on the above suggestion for further research. The present thesis aims to fill a gap in research in this area, as the discussion below shows.

The whole process of journal writing in this research occurs as an autonomous situation since, first of all, the blog of the online journal is carried out mostly by the participants after the teacher's initial and minimal participation. Thus, it is largely a student-conducted activity. The Internet, as a different medium for writing journals than the traditional pen and paper, creates an environment for the students to see each

other's writings, exchange knowledge and create relationships among themselves without undue influence of the usual teaching environment; in other words, it creates an environment where collaborative learning can and does occur in a natural way. Moreover, the journal assignment itself is more natural than when students are tasked to simply respond to questions set by the teacher. The journal topics were open-ended in nature, and the participants felt free to write whatever they wanted. Finally, at the time the participants were attending the course, it was not known that their journals would be researched.

The above features of the journaling situation minimize the risk of participants performing in an unnatural way because they knew they were being observed; this effect can, however, occur in other situations where learner autonomy is researched and evaluated. As Breen and Mann (1997: 141, cited in Benson 2001: 52) point out, "learners will give up their autonomy and put on the mask of autonomous behaviour" when they know that they are being researched. Therefore, it can be said that this research reveals genuine autonomous behaviour of the participants uninfluenced by the research situation. There was likely no Hawthrone effect to distort the results of the research.

Finally, the participants in this study are different from each other in age, nationality and background learning and teaching experience. Since autonomy is a "multidimensional construct" (Benson 2001: 51), the autonomous characteristics of the participants can be recognized in a variety of forms, "depending on their age, how far they have progressed with their learning, what they perceive their immediate learning needs to be, and so on" (Little 1991: 4). To understand the motivations behind the behaviour of the various participants better by interviewing them was one of the goals of this study.

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1.4   Aims of the study

This small-scale research investigates the use of blogs as journal writing among graduate student-teachers and aims to find out whether and how these participants show their autonomy in their journal entries. The aims of the research are to study the autonomous characteristics of student teachers in the online journal writing and the perceptions of the teachers about the online journal writing experience.

The researcher hopes that this study will be useful for language teachers who want to help their students to take more responsibility for their learning by writing online dialogue journals and collaborating with their classmates.

1.5   Research questions

The following research questions are answered in the course of this study:

1.   What autonomous characteristics can be found in the online journals of graduate student teachers in the MA-ELT program at Assumption University, Thailand?

2.   What are the perceptions of these graduate student teachers about the online journal writing experience in relation to learner autonomy?

1.6   Definitions of terms

- *Learner autonomy* is the capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making and independent action (Little 1991: 4). It also has a social aspect, which may involve control over the learning situation and call for particular capacities concerned with the learner's ability to interact with others in the learning process.

- *Autonomous learners* are those who understand the purpose of their learning programme, explicitly accept responsibility for their own learning, share in the setting of learning goals, take initiatives in planning and executing learning

activities, and regularly review their learning and evaluate its effectiveness (Little 2003).

- An *autonomous learning environment* in this study is a situation facilitated by the teacher in which students mostly take control of their own learning.

- *Student teachers* in this study are students (with or without teaching experience) who are enrolled in a Master's degree program in English Language Teaching and aim to become English language teachers after they finish the program.

- *Online journal writing* is a form of journal writing using the Internet as a tool. It is in the form of a class blog where teachers and students can write posts, give comments to each other's posts, upload pictures and pass on links to other interesting sites.

- *Blog*: A blog, or weblog, is a website that enables individuals or organizations to quickly share ideas and information. Multiple providers (e.g. Blogger, WordPress, Live-Journal) offer free and easy to use services. The writers can submit posts to the blog, and the readers can read and leave comments.

- *Collaborative learning* is a situation in which two or more people learn or attempt to learn something together (Dillenbourg 1999).

- *Metacognitive knowledge* includes all facts learners acquire about their own cognitive process as they are applied and used to gain knowledge and to acquire skills in varied situations (Flavel: 1979:906, cited in Wenden 1991: 34). In the case of language learners, this knowledge includes beliefs, insights and concepts that the learners have acquired about language and the language learning process. There are three kinds of metacognitive knowledge: person knowledge, strategic knowledge and task knowledge (Wenden 1991: 34). The metacognitive knowledge is one of the dimensions of autonomy in this study.

1.7   Organization of the thesis

Chapter One has given the background information of the use of journal writing via the Internet in language learning and teaching, and its support of communication among learners. It has described the importance of learner autonomy for the learner and the teacher, and the use of online journal writing as a way to promote learner autonomy in teacher education.

In Chapter Two, the researcher describes the literature concerning the situations that lead to learner autonomy. These consist of the importance of reflection, the use of journal writing for reflection, the use of the Internet as a tool for journal writing practice, and the nature of collaborative learning. Then, the basic concepts, characteristics and previous research on learner autonomy found in literature are reviewed, providing the background for the way this study analyzes the data of the study.

In Chapter Three, the researcher describes the context in which this study is being conducted, the participants in the study, the procedures for data collection, and the method of data analysis.

In Chapter Four, the researcher analyzes the data collectively and individually and discusses the important issues that emerge from the analysis.

In Chapter Five, the researcher discusses the significance of the findings of the study; she also reveals some limitations of the study and makes suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Introduction

This chapter reviews theories and research studies related to the present study. Following the Introduction, the first section of the chapter (Section 2.2) gives an overview of the nature of journal writing and its use in the educational context in general and the English language teaching context in particular. It shows that the benefits from writing journals in the English language teaching context are also related to autonomy in language learning. In the second section of the chapter (Section 2.3), literature is presented on the definition of learner autonomy, its related philosophies, and its centrality to FL teaching. The third section (Section 2.4) describes learner autonomy and the role of the teacher, and the last section (Section 2.5) explores research done in the area of learner autonomy and possible methods of analyzing data about it.

2.2   Background and purposes of journal writing

McDonough and McDonough (1997: 122) describe some definitions of logs, diaries and journals found in the literature. Logs are records of factual information and are generally objective in nature. Diaries are kinds of more personal, subjective texts, and journals are a combination of both subjective and objective data, for example, reflections as well as factual information. Basically, they all represent the reflections of personal experiences of a particular writer. In language learning and teaching, the three terms are used by teachers for the purpose of creation of learning events. Robinson (n.d) states that human beings have written journals in various forms from very early times to the current age. The practice of journal writing has been with us since the cave men marked on the walls. As times changed, people invented scripts

and first wrote on stone plates, bamboo stems or the bark or leaves of trees, and later invented paper and wrote on that with a pen. Today, as technology becomes more and more advanced, people write with the aid of computers and the Internet.

People use journal writing for different purposes: to note day-to-day weather conditions, or to record daily events, experiences, ideas, and knowledge; to let others know what they know, what they feel and what happened; and sometimes simply to relieve their stress. Diaries are used in history, literature, anthropology, autobiography, sociology, health studies, clinical psychology, and psychotherapy (McDonough and McDonough 1997). Some diaries have become famous and important books in history, such as the diaries of St. Augustine of Hippo, Ann Frank, Samuel Pepys, Malinowski, and Katherine Mansfield (McDonough and McDonough 1997).

The benefits of journal writing are abundant, as described by Robinson (n.d.), in relationship both to the self and to one's life's work or career. Some benefits in self-relationship include seeing one's personal strengths, encouraging trust in the self and in one's inner wisdom, expressions of acceptance of the self at a deeper level, encouraging freedom of self-expression, helping to develop a deeper understanding of life, awakening personal dreams, helping to find one's way, and recording the transformation of one's life. Benefits in terms of one's life's work/career include revealing greater potential and possibilities, releasing self-limiting beliefs, offering new perspectives, and helping to set new directions and intentions for one's life and work.

2.2.1 Journal writing in the educational context

Journal writing is not a new phenomenon in language education, but has been used in this domain for decades. In language learning research, diaries and journals are used

for introspection. Bailey (1996: 215) defines the diary study as a "first-person account of a language learning or teaching experience, documented through regular, candid entries in a personal journal and then analyzed for recurring patterns or salient events." To write a journal, one basically only needs pen and paper. Depending on the age, level and needs of the students, teachers in the L1 context give journal assignments for different purposes. Some of the purposes of journal writing assignments, according to Tompkins (2000: 171), are to record experiences, stimulate interest in certain topics, explore thinking, personalize learning, develop interactions; to wonder, predict and hypothesize; to engage the imagination, ask questions, activate prior knowledge, assume the role of another person, and share experiences with trusted readers.

Researchers have found that journal writing need not to be limited to a specific age group, subject area or ability, but can be used successfully with different kinds of learners. Even young children can draw pictures in their journals. Bolton (2001: 161) states that students use learning journals to record or to react to what they are learning in language, social studies, science or math. Staton (1983) used dialogue journal writing with deaf students. She also found journals to be a valuable component in developing writing and reading competence in both first and second language classes.

2.2.2 Journal writing in the ELT context

In the ELT context, journal writing may be used by learners, teachers or participant observers. The types of journals are defined differently by different researchers. McDonough and McDonough (1997: 133) categorize diary writing in language learning and teaching into two main types: 'pedagogic diary' and 'expert diary'. Pedagogic diaries are kept by learners in classrooms and trainees, and expert diaries are kept by experienced teachers and teacher trainers. In language learning classes,

teachers often ask their students to keep journals. The common procedure of using journals in language learning classroom is described by McDonough and McDonough (1997: 127). The contents of journals are kept confidential between teacher and individual learners. They are usually written in the target language, and error correction is not encouraged. Many teachers set questions or guidelines according to the need and nature of the course; some teachers may also develop a list of possible journal-writing topics with their students. In those journals, students often write reflections on their learning, discoveries of the gap in their knowledge and explorations of the relationship between what they are learning and their past experience. In some classes, journals are kept on open topics.

McDonough and McDonough (1997: 127) also argue that the data from the journals are likely to be unhelpful if they are assigned as a course requirement. On the other hand, many researchers show that journal writing in the language classroom gives many benefits for students.

Teacher researchers like Staton (1983) and Peyton (1993) have shared their own experience of dialogue journal writing with their students of different age, level and status and discovered the benefits of using journal writing in the classrooms. Staton (1983:7) asserts that "The primary goal of dialogue journals is better personal communication and mutual understanding between each individual student and teacher. Increased competence in using written language is a by-product of achieving this goal." Peyton (1993) argues that questioning is the effective way to promote student participation in the dialogue and to develop language proficiency.

Burton and Carroll (2001b: 5) stress that "journal writing, therefore, is an aid to language learning and self-regulation because it supports learners in developing

personal voice, a sense of audience, and the confidence to explore identity, and because it encourages learners to take risks with thinking and language".

Teacher researchers, Quirke (2001) and Alexander (2001), comment that dialogue journals are time-consuming for teachers, but they both feel that they are worth giving time and effort to. According to them, when journals are used with young learners and adolescent ESL students, it is found that there is better student-teacher communication, improved writing skill, a sense of anticipation of the reader, and authenticity in writing. It was found that some students in Quirke's class were still writing journals to him three years later.

Walter-Echols (2008) used free-topic dialogue journals with her student teachers who were attending an oral presentation course in the MA-ELT program at Assumption University, Thailand. The students were asked to write 10 journal entries within a 12-week course and received 100% credit for that component of the course if they submitted all 10 journals. Journal quality or length was not graded or evaluated and the grammar errors were not corrected. It was suggested, but not required, that students reflect about how they felt about the presentations, the classwork, the readings and the other course components. She found that students wrote not only about class content and their learning process, but also about their feelings regarding their life experiences and personal problems. This agrees with the statement of Worthington (1997) that "journal writing can allow a personal voice to develop, which is often lost when only traditional basic writing skills are stressed." This is because journals involve students in non-threatening exploration and development of personal ideas and feelings when the journals are not graded on linguistic competence.

Besides dialogue journals, other options for journal writing which have been used in different contexts are described by Walter-Echols (2008: 125): journaling based on assigned topics and readings; learning logs which traced the students' reflections about the class itself; student-to-student journaling planned by the teacher but carried out by the students themselves; electronic journaling using a discussion board format; journaling and discussion on a particular theme, e.g. culture shock; and reflective teaching journals. Practicing teachers choose to use certain kinds of journal writing formats which they believe will be appropriate for their students. They are sometimes mixed in nature. As they are carried out in different contexts and situations, the features and benefits found for them also differ.

Reflective journals promote self-awareness in language learning by encouraging reflection on learners' experiences and process of learning. Meizrow (1990: 174, cited in Burton and Carroll 2001b: 5) asserts that reflective journal writers become open to change and they can expect to -

- improve their understanding of how they learn best
- progress toward more autonomous learning
- strengthen their cross-cultural understanding and sense of identity
- become more effective learners
- become more articulate thinkers
- gain confidence in learners from reflecting on their success

In a study in an EAP class of a university in Australia, the participants were non-native speakers of English living and studying in a country where English is the major language (Davies 2001). The students were asked to reflect on and write about their experience in speaking with people outside the classroom. Their journals were discussed in the class and were given responses by both the students and the teacher. They were, therefore, interactive in nature. The journals revealed not only each student's speaking experience, but also their perspective on their learning opportunities outside the classroom. Since their journals were discussed in the class,

both teachers and learners gained considerable understanding of the many aspects involved in learning to speak a foreign language by consciously thinking about the learning process. When learner journals are read and responded to by the teacher and by other students, it creates a means of collaborative learning. Burton and Carroll (2001b: 5) summarize that for language learners, "journal writing has the potential to transform learning experiences into living language for learners" by its conversational nature, its social nature, its pedagogic nature, its dialogic nature and its ability to cross cultural boundaries.

2.2.3 Journal writing in language teacher education context

The use of journals has increasingly become an integral part of both language teaching and teacher training. Research has shown that dialogue journals help both language learners and student teachers develop the skills they need for personal and collaborative reflection. Porter et al. (1996) define the benefits of using journals in teacher education as follows:

1. Students can articulate problems they are having with course content and therefore get help.

2. Diaries promote autonomous learning, encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning.

3. By exchanging ideas with their teacher, students gain confidence, make sense of difficult material, and generate original insights.

4. Keeping journals can lead to more productive class discussion.

5. Student teachers are encouraged to make connections between course content and their own teaching.

6. Journals create teacher-student and student-student interaction.

7.   By matching training methodology with second language teaching methodology, they make a class more process oriented.

Burton and Carroll (2001b: 1) also state that through journal writing, researchers, teachers and students have become aware of themselves as teachers and learners, and of the teaching and learning context.

> ….. journal writing has given them [researchers, teachers and students] a framework within which to think through learning issues such as curriculum processes, self-assessment and evaluation of learning, the nature of language and learning itself, and the transformation of understanding that underlies language development.
> (Burton and Carroll, 2001: 1)

In language teacher education, reflective journals play an important role for the professional development of pre-service and in-service teachers. Journals have been used in English language teacher education for many years. Porter et al. (1996) state the three ideas that, according to them, motivate the use of journals in a teacher preparation course. The first is the importance of the connection between writing and learning. The second is that writing is a social activity as well as a cognitive activity. The third idea is the current focus in language teaching on a communicative approach, which implies more learner involvement in the learning process.

Teacher educators have used reflective journals in different courses they have taught. Dalogu (2001) used reflective journal writing as part of a teaching practicum course in the final semester of a BA degree in TEFL in Turkey. Students were given a framework as a guide to their first journal writing experience, but they could also add topics of their own. The journals were discussed in small groups. The result showed that students gained confidence and felt well prepared to teach.

Chen (2008) researched reflective journals used in the Theory and Practice of Reading course in the MA-ELT program at Assumption University. She found that

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the use of journal writing on assigned topics helped learners become aware of their reading habit and become more reflective during the course.

Thonus (2001) used journal writing in teaching Second Language Acquisition theory to help student teachers reflect on their experience as language learners. In this research, it was found that the students developed empathy toward the language learners, explored aspects of ESL acquisition, and made connections between theory and practice. Another kind of journal writing, called a professional dialogue journal, was carried on by two in-service teachers (Reichmann 2001). They noticed the enhancement of their professional development through their collaborative dialogue journals.

The research shows that discussion within groups via journals and peer response can give benefits to both students and teachers. Burton and Carroll (2001b: 4) state that "collaborative reflection – which is how dialogue journals work – enables interaction between cognitive and communicative process"; and that "through the mediation of social language, as in dialogue journals, learners appropriate experience and the skills of self-regulation." Therefore, it can be concluded that autonomy happens in journal writing, especially in dialogue journal writing with teacher and other classmates.

2.2.4 Collaboration in journal writing

The collaborative nature of learning is revealed in dialogue journals where journals are responded to by teachers, and sometimes by other students. The aforementioned journal writing research has described the varied forms collaboration takes in the journaling process: group discussion, peer feedback and teacher feedback. Kaikkonen (2001) asserts that sharing personal observations and reflections with other learners in

small groups makes learning come alive and gives learners opportunities to compare their views with those of others.

In the process of collaboration, the learner learns by internalizing meanings acquired through linguistic interaction. According to Vygotsky (1978: 86, cited in Benson and Lor, 1998: 18), the development of the learner takes place within the "zone of proximal development" and it is defined as "the distance between the actual development levels as determined by independent problem-solving and potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers."

In brief, Vygotskian theory holds that language is constructive of both external social process and internal cognitive process and that the development of the higher mental process derives from the internalization of external communicative speech (Benson and Lor, 1998: 18). Therefore, giving feedback plays an important role in journal writing practice, especially in dialogue journals. Teacher's comments which give suggestions, evaluate positively, add information, or support the students generate frank interaction and self-regulation. These kinds of feedback promote trust and relationship between teacher and student. Not only teacher's comments but also peer responses are important in the process of learning, since knowledge is unique to the individual.

In research on dialogue journals with MA in Applied Linguistics students, Watson Todd et al. (2001) described the tutors' comments as being useful for the participants. In his research, he categorizes nine types of responses: five of these are associated with active listening (Johnson 1986, cited in Watson Todd et al. 2001) and the additional categories were added by Watson Todd (2001: 356). They are supporting, probing, evaluating, understanding, analyzing, suggesting, adding

information, agreeing and thanking; these categories seem useful in giving feedback on students' journals and is used to analyze the data in this study, where relevant.

Gebhard (1999) also suggests the idea of collaborative dialogue journals between in-service teachers and teacher supervisors in teacher education, and he states that these journals offer chances for the teachers to support each others' efforts to explore teaching. He then characterizes and illustrates seven response types. They are described as follows:

1. Affective and personalizing comments
2. Procedural comments
3. Direct responses to questions
4. Understanding responses
5. Exploratory suggestions
6. Synthesis comments and questions
7. Unsolicited comments and questions

2.2.5 Electronic journal writing

Journal writing has been used in traditional classrooms for many years, with some limitations. Giving time for responding to journals is one of the problems that still need to be solved, especially if it is in a large class. Worthington (1997: 2-7) organizes student-student exchange journals between two classes of the same size and level. This appears to be a wonderful option for teachers with large classes.

There still can be other difficulties in exchanging journals. When they are written on paper and exchanged with the teacher or within the class, readers, both teacher and students, may find it difficult to read some handwriting. When they are written in notebooks, it takes time for these to go back and forth between the teacher and the students. Another weakness with this method is that it is difficult for students to have a chance to see each others' journals when cooperation and interaction among them are needed. Using computers and the Internet is a possible way to solve these problems.

The emergence of these technological tools makes for an important evolution in education. With the increasing use of the Internet and computers in daily life, it seems obvious that they will also be an important part of the learning environment for the future. Since the time the computer was invented in the mid 20th century, educators have been making efforts to transform the language learning classroom setting into a more authentic learning experience. Email is one of the types of computer-mediated communication (CMC) that furthers this aim of authenticity by facilitating communication, giving students a sense of achievement, empowering the writer and thus enhancing learning. It is also often used for journaling in some language classes. Although this mode of journaling may not be appropriate for academic situations in which IT is not highly developed, using the technology has several advantages over the traditional handwritten journal of previous generations.

Trites (2001) used e-mail dialogue journals with graduate ESL students of different cultural backgrounds. She found that the use of technology was challenging for some students who did not have easy access to computers, but others encountered no difficulties and easily adopted this means of handing in their journals. One of the benefits she found from the e-mail dialogue journals is that they helped to maximize class time since journaling can be done outside of the class time. It was also found that e-mail feedback took on an informal tone, and that the interactions were both instantaneous and spontaneous at times.

Goettsch (2001: 71-83) also states that "computer-mediated discourse creates a dynamic that can affect student writing differently than traditional written journals do." She uses on-line journaling with ESL students in a University Writing and Critical Reading course at a university in the United States. E-mail is used to write the journals, which are posted online. The students have to initiate a topic and post it

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every week. They also have to post a minimum of one response to a topic per week, but they are encouraged to participate more. Goettsch (2001: 71) states that "on-line journals are a refreshing and manageable way to energize students about writing". It was found that the students got a sense of community, both inside and outside the classroom, which brought about closeness among class members. Thus, they felt that they became confident to express their own opinions and views, especially the shy international students. Their competency in writing also increased.

In recent years, Internet technology has changed dramatically. Widely available software and sites allow computer users all types of interactions through blogs, wikis, multiplayer games and social network sites. Not surprisingly, language educators are beginning to exploit these as potential tools for language teaching. Among these, the weblog or blog is one of the software types used in L1 and L2 writing classes. With the increasing use of blogs, free versions of blogging software are emerging such as Blogger, Wordpress and Live Journal. People sometimes use blogging as diary writing to record their events in life. Educators are beginning to exploit blogs as a potential tool for the teaching of first and second language writing.

One main genre of blog is the personal journal, which falls within the pre-Internet tradition of diaries and personal letters (Chesher 2005, cited in Warschauer and Grimes 2007: 5). Once a blog is created by an IT technician, anyone can be an author on the blog. A blog is easy to create and is even created by students in some classes. The text posted last appears at the top, and there is a space for the readers to respond to each post. Language learning researchers have studied the use of blogs in the classroom, and it has been found that the blogs are helpful for learning, reflection, building a sense of community and improvement in writing skills (Arena 2008; Pinkman 2005; Huang 2008).

According to Suzuki (2004), blogs in education may be used in manifold ways, the most common being:

- By individual learners to post work and reflect (may be assessed).
- By the class to discuss and publish assignments (sometimes assessed).
- By teachers to post assignments, suggestions and links for students.
- By teachers as a further development and research tool posting ideas and links to the wider professional community.

Huang (2008) found in her research that the writing skills of undergraduate students in 'Basic English' at Assumption University of Thailand improved through use of blogs. Nowlan (2008) states that writing journals and using the Internet and technology can make the learner more reflective and communicative and thus foster autonomous language learning, not only in western countries, but also in Asia. Alm (2009) indicates that blog-based reflective writing increases the learners' sense of autonomy, and that it has a positive impact on L2 learners' perception of language awareness and development. Therefore using blogs as L2 learner journals supports a language learning environment which fosters L2 learner autonomy.

2.3 Dominant philosophies and definitions of learner autonomy

Autonomous learning, or the aspect of learning in which learners are supposed to take major control over their own learning, is now playing an important role in language learning. Learner autonomy is seen by researchers as a desirable feature of a learner because it is regarded as a pre-requisite to life-long learning. Therefore, educators are finding ways to promote learner autonomy in the classroom.

The term 'autonomy' comes from the Greek word 'autonomos' which means 'having its own laws'. The concept of autonomy in language learning is influenced by four major domains; educational reform, adult education, the psychology of learning, and political philosophy (Benson 2001). In the field of education reform,

philosophers like John Dewey, William Kilpatrick, Paolo Freire, Ivian Illich and Carl Rogers emphasized *the freedom of learning*.

> *Dewey's philosophy of education rested upon the belief that individuals have* a moral responsibility to engage in the betterment and reform of the societies in which they live. The aims of education in democratic society thus go beyond the mastery of subject matter to preparation for participation in social and political life.
>
> (Benson 2001: 25)

In the field of adult education, researchers and practioners began to study the self-direction process in which "individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others" (Knowles 1975: 18, cited in Benson 2001: 33), and this had a strong influence on approaches to autonomy. In the psychology of learning, the concept of constructivists – Vygotsky and his followers – self-regulation and the ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development) had a great influence on the concept of learner autonomy. Little (1996: 214) states that "the chief argument in favour of group work as a means of developing learner autonomy is Vygotskyan in origin" because it gives the idea of collaboration as a key factor in the development of autonomy.

The political view of autonomy is known as personal autonomy, and is concerned with learner autonomy. Holec, a "prominent figure within the field of autonomy" (Benson 2001: 8), brings out the political aspect of education by stating that

> If democratic states are to develop and flourish as democracies, they must undertake educational measures calculated to develop the capacity of their citizens to think and act as free and self-determining individuals.
>
> (Holec 1981: 3)

It is because, autonomy is a pre-condition for effective learning, as Benson (2001: 1) states, when the learners become autonomous they not only become better language learners but also develop into more responsible and critical members of the communities in which they live.

Since learner autonomy is influenced by concepts from various perspectives, it is difficult to define exactly; thus, researchers define it in different ways. Holec (1998: 3) defines learner autonomy as the "ability to take charge of one's own learning". Little (1990: 7) adds Holec's cognitive perspective to a psychological perspective and defines it as "a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action". Similarly to Holec, Benson (2001: 47) defines autonomy as "the capacity to take control of one's own learning," but he differentiates three levels of learner control: control over learning management, cognitive process and learning content. For this reason, Little (1990: 7) asserts that autonomy is not "a single, easily describable behaviour". These definitions have led researchers to understand learner autonomy, generally, as the capacity to make adjustments between one's own freedom and responsibility in learning.

2.4   Learner characteristics and contextual conditions for learner autonomy

Reinders (n.d.) compares learner autonomy metaphorically with the journey of a traveler:

> Learner Autonomy is, first and foremost, a mindset. A way of thinking about learning as a journey where you decide where to go, and how to travel. You may occasionally hire a tour guide to explain about the local sights, but then you're on the road again, to wherever the events and the people you meet take you. Sometimes you go directly to the next town, and sometimes you stop for a drink on the way. Sometimes you go to the museum, and sometimes for a hike in the mountains. Sometimes you read about the history of the sights, and sometimes you just soak up the atmosphere. Sometimes you feel great, and sometimes you are homesick. And sometimes, you just need a break.
>
> (Reinders n.d)

According to Reinders, in the process of learning, learners find their own goals, make their own decisions, communicate and sometimes get help from others. More importantly, they are open to their feelings and emotions and follow intuitively whatever way their current interest takes them. Wenden (1991) states that autonomous learners are the successful learners who have acquired the learning strategies, the

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knowledge about learning, and the attitude of a teacher, all of which enables them to use these skills and knowledge confidently, flexibly, appropriately and independently. Wenden emphasizes the cognitive and affective dimensions of learner autonomy and underscores the role of learners' interaction with their teacher and peer learners.

Candy (1991: 459-66, cited in Benson 2001: 85) has listed more than 100 competencies associated with autonomy in learning. These are grouped under 13 headings. According to Candy, the learner capable of autonomous learning will characteristically:

- be methodological and disciplined
- be logical and analytical
- be reflective and self-aware
- demonstrate curiosity, openness and motivation
- be flexible
- be interdependent and interpersonally competent
- be persistent and responsible
- be venturesome and creative
- show confidence and have a positive self-concept
- be independent and self-sufficient
- have developed information seeking and retrieval skills
- have knowledge about, and skill at, learning process
- develop and use criteria for evaluating.

Benson (2001: 86) specifies that "the autonomous learner is not simply one who is capable of performing actions associated with self-management". He emphasizes the importance of the learner's control over his/her cognitive process. According to Benson, this capacity is the fundamental characteristic of autonomous learners. He describes control over one's cognitive process as related to the learner's attention, reflection and metacognitive knowledge (see Figure 2.1).

```
  ┌─────────────────────┐                  ┌─────────────────┐
  │ Directing Attention │ ───────────────▶ │   Reflection    │
  └─────────────────────┘                  └─────────────────┘

              Cognitive process

        ┌───────────────────────────┐
        │         Building          │
        │      metacognitive        │
        │        knowledge          │
        └───────────────────────────┘
```
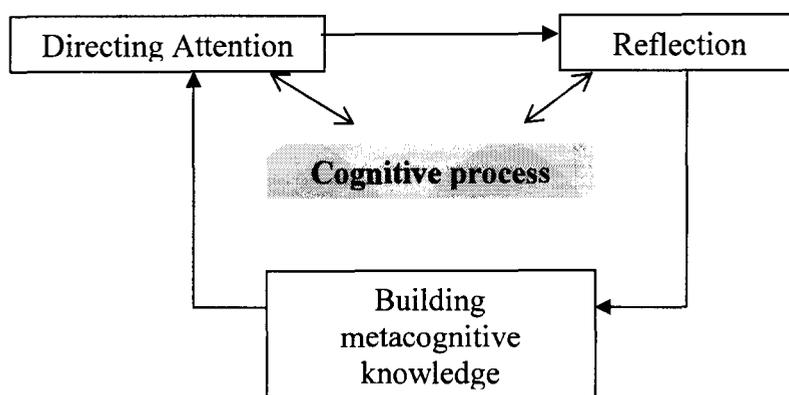
Figure 2.1   **The psychology of autonomous learning (Benson 2001)**

According to the above diagram, attention, reflection and metacognitive knowledge are interrelated with each other in the cognitive process. Attention, awareness, and consciousness are its primary stages. Reinders (2000: 11) asserts that "paying attention, comparing, building hypotheses are all characteristics of the autonomous language learner." Wenden (1991) points out the need for raising awareness of the learning process and making sense of learners' willingness and responsibility to take charge of their own learning to become autonomous learners. As she observes, "without awareness [learners] will remain trapped in their old patterns of beliefs and behaviours and never be fully autonomous." Her idea implies that autonomy refers to learners' awareness of the learning process rather than to a particular mode of learning.

Kohonen (2001: 36-44) suggests that "becoming an autonomous language learner is a question of a conscious and ongoing reflection of the tasks, based on personal experiences of language use", and that "the goal of autonomous language learning needs to be based on a broad experiential learning approach." In the same way, Little (1995) suggests that formal language learning should be related to the learner's life experiences. In other words, classroom learning conditions should be considered in terms of their real life applications beyond the classroom. Making

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choices about learning content and process, reflecting on the consequences, being aware of the achievements and finding out new needs are essential elements for the development of learner autonomy (Kohonen 2001:45).

In consequence, for teachers to develop learner autonomy in their students, it is important that they find a way to help students to be aware of what they have done and further reflect on it, so that they can achieve personal awareness, process awareness, situational awareness, and task awareness (Kohonen 2001: 36). Flavell (1979, cited in Wenden 1991: 34) refers to awareness of the learning process as metacognition, and thus sees this as being the enabling power for learners' success in learning.

Metacognitive approaches are getting the attention of professional educators. Krathwohl (2002) adds a new dimension of knowledge to Bloom's revised taxonomy: metacognitive knowledge. In this taxonomy, remembering, understanding and applying knowledge are regarded as lower order thinking, while analyzing, evaluating and creating new knowledge are regarded as higher order thinking. According to Flavel (1979, cited in Wenden 1991: 34), "metacognitive knowledge includes all facts learners acquire about their own cognitive process as they are applied and used to gain knowledge and acquire skills in varied situations". Wenden (1991) makes the explicit link between metacognitive knowledge and learner autonomy. Flavel describes three kinds of metacognitive knowledge: person knowledge, strategic knowledge and task knowledge (Wenden 1991: 35). Wenden, subsequently, explains these three kinds of metacognitive knowledge in detail.

Person knowledge is general knowledge that learners may have about the laws of human learning. It includes what learners know about themselves as learners, that is, cognitive and affective factors that facilitate their own learning.

Strategic knowledge is the stored knowledge about strategies. It includes knowledge regarding strategies that work best and knowledge about how best to approach language learning. Learning strategies, according to Oxford (2003: 81), are "specific plans or steps – either observable, such as taking notes or seeking out a conversation partner, or unobservable such as mental analysis of a word – that L2 learners intentionally employ to improve reception, storage, retention, and retrieval of information." In the field of language teaching and learning, learning strategies are one of the contributory factors in successful learning. Learning strategies can thus be seen to be autonomous acts, which explains why research on autonomy shares terminology with research on learning strategies.

Task knowledge refers to what learners need to know about the procedures that constitute the learning tasks to accomplish them successfully. It includes knowledge of the purpose of the task, knowledge of the nature of the task, knowledge of when deliberate learning is required, and knowledge of task demands. These three main kinds of metacognitive knowledge are shown in the following table (Wenden 1991):

Table 2.1   **Knowledge about language learning**

Kind	Defining aspects
Person	Cognitive factors that facilitate learning
	Affective factors that facilitate learning
Strategic	Effective strategies to particular tasks
	General principles to determine strategy choice
Task	Task purpose or significance
	Nature of language and communication
	Need for deliberate effort
	Task demands
	- knowledge required to do the task
	- how to complete a task: steps and strategies
	- level of difficulty

(Wenden 1991: 49)

In addition to the metacognitive dimension, Wenden (1991) explores the affective dimension of learner autonomy. Two distinct learner attitudes towards

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learner autonomy are presented. These are their willingness to take on responsibility and the confidence in their ability as learners. Wenden (1991: 51) states that "learners whose evaluation towards autonomy is positive will try to become more responsible in their learning and those whose evaluation is negative will not." There may be some learners who are not willing to take initiative and will be more teacher-dependent, or they will feel that they are not capable of taking on the challenge of autonomy. Wenden, therefore, explores factors influencing learner attitudes towards autonomy. They are the socialization process, conflicting role demands, the complexity of roles, lack of metacognitive knowledge, learned helplessness, and lack of self-esteem and self-image. The influence of social factors, such as the atmosphere of the classroom situation and the role of interaction with peers on learner autonomy can be seen as part of these factors.

The social dimension of learner autonomy has been emphasized by many researchers, i.e. the idea that autonomy does imply interdependence, which is working together with teachers and other learners towards shared goals (Benson 2001: 14). One of the statements to the idea of interdependence as a factor in learner autonomy is made by Kohonen (1992: 19, cited in Benson 2001: 14).

> Personal decisions are necessarily made with respect to social and moral norms, traditions and expectations. Autonomy thus includes the notion of interdependence, that is being responsible for one's own conduct in the social context: being able to cooperate with others and solve conflicts in constructive ways.

Little (1996: 210, cited in Benson 2001: 14) has also argued that collaboration is essential to the development of autonomy as a psychological capacity, stating that "the development of a capacity for reflection and analysis, central to the development of learner autonomy, depends on the development of an internalization of a capacity to participate fully and critically in social interactions." Little (1990: 8) defines two

kinds of interaction in classroom learning: "the internal psychological interaction between new and existing knowledge, and the external social interaction by which new knowledge is mediated and learners can negotiate their way towards new meanings." Through classroom interaction among students, not only knowledge but also cultural understanding is constructed. Kaikkonen (2001: 82) stresses that "communication naturally works better if we share assumptions and knowledge of the culture and world." Therefore, cultural awareness is essential in social interaction. Awareness and understanding of one's own culture and that of others make interaction more effective. Press (1996, cited in Benson 2001), in her study of cultural influences on student responses to autonomy, also stresses the importance of assessing the degree of students' attachment to their broader cultural identities.

Autonomous learners are regarded as those who "understand the purpose of their learning programme, explicitly accept responsibility for their learning, share in the setting of learning goals, take initiative in planning and executing learning activities and regularly review their learning and evaluate its effectiveness" (Little 2003). In other words, learner autonomy requires insight, a positive attitude, a capacity for reflection, and a readiness to be proactive in self-management and in interaction with others. Therefore, in order to create a holistic view of learner autonomy, the language learning situation should be seen from the cognitive, metacognitive, affective and social perspectives.

2.5   Learner autonomy and the role of the teacher

As autonomy is important for the successful learning process, the teacher's role takes on a crucial position in learner autonomy. In the last decades, foreign language teachers have been increasingly confronted with the challenge of putting the principle of autonomous learning into practice. Since this challenge will continue to

play a role for teachers, teacher training should always address the principles of

learner autonomy. The role of the teacher in autonomous learning can be seen in the

expression of five negative factors of autonomy by Little (1991: 7).

- Autonomy is not a synonym for self-instruction; in other words, autonomy is not limited to learning without a teacher.
- In the classroom context, autonomy does not entail an abdication of responsibility on the part of the teacher; it is not a matter of letting the learners get on with things as best they can.
- On the other hand, autonomy is not something that teachers do to learners; that is it is not another teaching method
- Autonomy is not a single, easily described behaviour
- Autonomy is not a steady state achieved by learners.

Therefore, the teacher's knowledge and experience about learner autonomy is the

essential element in order to support the students in becoming autonomous learners.

However, the teacher's ability to foster autonomy depends on his/her level of

knowledge and awareness with regard to conceptualizations pertaining to that

concept:

> This new and broader view of autonomy provides a stronger basis from which
> the profession can examine critically what it does, for it is vital that teachers
> have a clear picture of the implication that their choices have for the learners,
> academically, personally, culturally, politically.
>
> (Sinclair 2000: 13)

This emphasizes how important the role and knowledge of the teacher is in shaping

the students to become not only good learners but also good citizens.

In addition, Breen and Mann (1997: 45) suggest that "an essential precondition

for the teacher to be able to foster autonomous learning is an explicit awareness of the

teacher's own self as a learner." In other words, in order to create spaces for learners

to exercise their autonomy, teachers must recognize and assert their own. According

to Benson (2001: 174), it is argued by several researchers that teacher education

should not only train teachers with a knowledge of issues related to learner autonomy,

but also provide experiences of autonomous learning designed to foster autonomy.

Edelhoff (1984: 189, cited in Dam 2007: 1) argues that "teachers will hardly be prepared or able to administer autonomous learning process if their own learning is not geared to the same principles." This is essential for trainee teachers, especially those who are inexperienced as teachers and those who have been taught in traditional teacher-centred classrooms in their prior education. Therefore, the present research aims to emphasize the learning situation and behaviours of student teachers who are being prepared to be language teachers, in particular in regard to their capacity to demonstrate autonomy.

2.6   Review of related research

The measurement of autonomy is problematic because autonomy is a multidimensional construct (Benson 2001). One of the problems in measuring this construct is that autonomous behaviour can take different forms depending on age, stage of learning, perceived learning needs and even the learning context. Research on the nature of autonomy is usually descriptive and seeks to find the behavioural and psychological attributes associated with control over learning management, cognitive process and the content of learning (Benson 2001). Benson (2001) argues that autonomous behaviour is essentially self-initiated rather than generated in response to a task which requires either explicitly or implicitly observed behaviours. However, research can help to understand whether the capacity to control one's own learning comes naturally to learners or whether it needs to be acquired through a formal process of training. It can also help us to understand what to focus on when we seek to foster autonomy and evaluate the results of our efforts.

One of the research studies on students' reflective thinking by Lor (1998, cited in Benson, 2001; see also Ch. 1, p. 12) observed first-year students at the University of Hong Kong. Lor studied what kinds of topics students reflect upon and how

reflective they are. The students were asked to reflect upon their learning in the context of an out-of-class learning project. From her study, Lor observed a great deal of the students' capacity to reflect upon learning and the role of affective factors that facilitate their learning. She states that reflection upon positive feelings about learning experiences can confirm the learner's sense of the rightness of a plan. On the other hand, negative feelings about learning experiences can become an occasion for deeper reflection leading to plan changes. She suggested that further research be done on the nature of reflection in natural contexts of learning and ways to promote further reflection.

Another research on reflecting about the learning process was carried out by Benson and Lor (1998) with an independent learning program at the English Centre of the University of Hong Kong. They asked students to reflect on their learning experiences and evaluate their progress. They used discourse analysis to study students' self-reports. Benson and Lor (1994: 14) state: "learner discourse on language learning may be understood as a part of a process in which conceptions and beliefs interact and are transformed into usable theories of learning." It was found that the connection between students' beliefs about language learning and their readiness for learner autonomy is somewhat blurred. In other words, the students in their research were not fully ready for autonomous learning.

An additional study on learners' beliefs and the use of strategies was conducted by Rukthong (2008) on Thai university EFL students by using a set of questionnaires, self-reports and individual interviews. Their beliefs about language learning and the use of strategies were found to be connected to their readiness for learner autonomy. The result shows that the participants had beliefs and knowledge about the use of learning strategies, but did not feel fully ready to learn autonomously.

The researcher suggested studying the same relationship between beliefs and autonomy in language teachers. The current study goes a step further than Rukthong's in that it studies participants with a multicultural background and analyzes their own classroom output, rather than their self-perceptions only. Thus it is able to provide a view of the participants' state of autonomy which is based on their spontaneous writings as well as their behaviors in communication with each other, not just on solicited responses directed expressly at the topic of study.

A study which used blog for diary writing in in-service teacher training was carried out by Suzuki. Suzuki (2004) analyzed a blog written by teachers as a further professional development and research tool posting ideas and links to the wider professional community. She observed the pattern of changes in motivation and steadily more positive self-evaluation in the blogs of these in-service teachers during a course period. She notes that these changes are affected by blog visitors' comments about content and previous data-entry. She concludes that keeping a diary using a blog is an ideal research tool which is a non-invasive, non-threatening observation instrument and easily maintained over a period of time. The weakness or difficulty of diary studies is the need of a great investment of time and energy to analyze data that is very rich. Finally, she expresses her perspective that diary data provide a more honest view than numerical research can ever hope to provide. In addition to studying the diary data of in-service teachers on their classroom teaching experience, it is also worthwhile to analyze the diaries of pre-service or student teachers on their preparation process of becoming teachers, which the present study has done.

Except for Suzuki's research, the studies so far reviewed observed learner autonomy in the context of EFL learning through journals, questionnaire, self-report and interview. It has been found that the relationship between beliefs on the learning

process and learner autonomy is blurred. The interaction between student-teacher and student-student is not included. In other words, the social dimension is undervalued in these studies. Most of the data are objective data and are taken from the perspective of students for the purpose of research. There is a need to be aware of one problem in measuring autonomy, as Breen and Mann (1997: 141, cited in Benson 2001) point out:

> Learners will generally seek to please me as the teacher. If I ask them to manifest behaviours that they think I perceive as the exercise of autonomy, they will gradually discover what these behaviours are and will subsequently reveal them back to me. Put simply, learners will give up their autonomy to put on the mask of autonomous behaviour.

Diary study can be regarded as a way to avoid putting on the mask of autonomous behaviour. The research of Suzuki on the diary was conducted in a language teacher education context and was looked at from the cognitive and social perspectives. However, the data were not focused on the autonomous learning behaviours of language teachers. It is, therefore, necessary to explore this aspect, that is, the autonomy of student teachers, in order to discover their autonomous learning behaviours in their teacher preparation course so that they can foster learner autonomy in their future students.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1   Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology employed to seek answers to the research questions stated in Chapter 1. It restates the research questions and describes the research context, the research participants, and the method of data collection and data analysis.

3.2   Restatement of the research questions

1.   What autonomous characteristics can be found in the online journals of graduate student teachers in the MA-ELT program at Assumption University, Thailand?

2.   What are the perceptions of these graduate student teachers about the online journal writing experience in relation to learner autonomy?

3.3   Research context and participants

This study focuses on the journals of post-graduate student teachers in the MA-ELT program at Assumption University of Thailand. According to the study plan of the Graduate School of English at that time, these student teachers had to attend 6 trimesters of courses within two years and to complete 42 credits to graduate. This study is being carried out using data from a 3-credit 12-week course, Theory and Practice of Writing, which was a required course at that time. The students were in their fourth trimester when they took the course, and had finished most of the required courses needed for their English teaching program. In the Theory and Practice of Writing course, the following tasks were carried out:

- reading and summarizing of teacher-selected weekly articles related to the teaching of writing;

- peer-teaching using a genre-approach

- group writing of sample genre-based essays, subsequently posted online and commented on by classmates and teacher;

- production of a short research paper on a writing topic;

- posting of online journal entries every week in the form of blog and responding to each others' posts.

It is the last task, the online journaling, which provides the data to be analyzed for this study. In these journals the participants wrote about the articles they had read, their learning process, especially writing, their experiences in the class, their research paper and their life experiences.

The production of two classes, the journals written in the class the researcher attended and the journals from the class immediately before hers, were analyzed for this study; it was these two classes that offered the fullest data sets for analysis. In addition to the journal entries, biodata and the students' perspectives on writing online journals (collected via an email interview, see Table 3.1 below), are analyzed. The class which met in Trimester 2/2009 (June-August 2009), had 10 students from Thailand, China, Myanmar, Turkey and Vietnam. In the study, this class is identified as Group 1 and produced 104 journal entries. The class which met in Trimester 1/2009 (January-March 2009), had 14 students from Thailand, China, Vietnam, Myanmar and Finland. It is identified as Group 2 and produced 138 journal entries. Altogether there are 23 study participants in the two groups; however, one Vietnamese student had to repeat the course and is thus listed twice (i.e., as a member of both classes). The participants are different in age, nationality and previous teaching experience. The biographical and educational data have been summarized in the following table (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Participants' information

Name	Gender	Age	Nationality	Previous teaching experience	No. of Posts	Answer to email questionnaire
Group 1 (Trimester 2/2009)						
P1	F	31	Turkish	Yes (TP+)	10	Yes
P2	F	26	Chinese	Yes (TP)	10	Yes
P3	M	30	Vietnamese	Yes (TP+)	10	Yes
P4	F	24	Thai	Yes (TP)	10	Yes
P5	F	-	Thai	-	10	No
P6	F	25	Chinese	Yes (TP+)	10	Yes
P7	F	38	Chinese	Yes (TP+)	11	Yes
P8	F	29	Chinese	Yes (TP+)	10	Yes
P9	F	32	Myanmar	Yes (TP)	10	Yes
P10	F	41	Myanmar	Yes (TP)	10	Yes
Group 2 (Trimester 1/2009)						
P11	F	26	Vietnamese	Yes (TP+)	12	Yes
P12	F	-	Chinese	-	10	No
P13	F	-	Myanmar	-	10	No
P14	F	-	Chinese	-	10	No
P15	F	34	Chinese	Yes (TP+)	9	Yes
P3	M	30	Vietnamese	Yes (TP+)	3	Yes
P16	F	27	Vietnamese	Yes (TP+)	11	Yes
P17	F	29	Finnish	Yes (TP+)	10	Yes
P18	F	28	Thai	Yes (TP)	10	Yes
P19	F	34	Myanmar	Yes (TP+)	10	Yes
P20	F	40+	South African	Yes (TP+)	5	Yes
P21	F	26	Thai	Yes (TP+)	10	Yes
P22	M	-	Thai	-	9	No
P23	F	26	Myanmar	Yes (TP+)	11	Yes

P = participant, TP = Teaching Practicum, TP+ = more than Teaching Practicum

Most of the participants in the study are female. Their ages range between 24 to over 40. Most of the participants are Asian nationalities, such as Thai, Chinese, Vietnamese and Myanmar, while a few of them are Westerners, such as South African, Finnish and Turkish. Out of 23 participants 18 responded to the email questionnaire. Of the 18 participants who answered the questionnaire, 5 participants

had teaching experience only in their 'Teaching Praticum', while the other 13 had teaching experience previous to beginning the MA program. The number of posts written by the members of Group 1 is evenly distributed, while that of Group 2 ranges between 3 and 12 posts.

For the posting of the online journals, the teacher created a blog, of which she was the administrator. Every student in each class was given a user name and password so that they could post and edit their journals and give comments to their peers. In the first entry of the blog, the teacher described the purpose of giving an online journal as a writing task and gave instructions to the students on how to post their journal entries. She participated in the blog during the first part of the course, after which the students carried on the process independently until the end of the trimester. The only other role the teacher played was to check that all the students participated regularly for evaluation purposes at the trimester's end.

3.4 Method of data collection

Data was collected in two forms, the main one being the student output in the journals, which was used to answer Research Question 1. Secondly, the results of an online interview survey provided data which were analyzed to answer Research Question 2.

3.4.1 Journals

The first source of data for this study was the online journals written by the two classes of students described above and identified as Group 1 (meeting in Trimester 1/2009) and Group 2 (meeting in Trimester 2/2009), respectively. Group 1's 104 journal entries appear online at www.gse.au.edu/journal2009, while Group 2's 138 entries appear at www.gse.au.edu/journal. These two groups' journals make for a total

40

of 242 journal entries. The journals appeared online as in the following image (Figure 3.1).
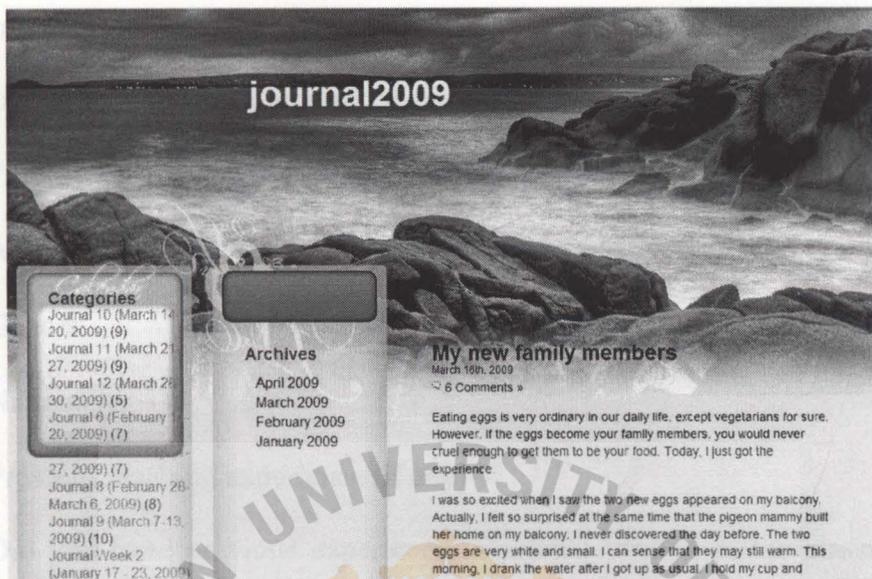
Figure 3.1 The appearance of online journal as a blog

Nunan (1997:118) states that diaries, logs and journals are important introspective tools in language research. They have been used for the investigation of second language acquisition, teacher-learner interaction, teacher education, and other aspects of language teaching, learning and use. The journals that make up the data for this study are different from traditional dialog journals in that they were written online. Not only is the use of technology in their production expected to have an effect on the output of the participants, but the audience for the journals comprises not only the teacher but all the other students in the class as well. In fact, in both classes, the teacher was a participant in the weekly journaling at the beginning of the trimester, but did not participate in the blog after a certain week. Thus, much of the data in the study was self-generated by the students without influence from the teacher and can be said to represent true student autonomy.

3.4.2 Questionnaires

The participants were asked to respond to an open-ended e-mail questionnaire concerning their perception of the practice of online journal writing and its relation to learner autonomy. The questions asked in the e-mail interview follow:

1. Please kindly fill in your background information.

   - Age   -

   - Gender   -

   - Nationality   -

   - Previous teaching experience (if any) –

2. Did you have previous experience in journal writing in the classroom as a teacher or as a student before you attended this MA-ELT program? If so, describe your personal experience and opinion of journal writing.

3. Did you have previous experience in writing blogs before the 'Theory and Practice of Writing' course?

4. Did you like writing online journals in the 'Theory and Practice of Writing' course?

5. What benefits did you get from writing online journals?

6. Do you think that writing online journals helped you to become an autonomous (independent) learner? If so, in what way(s)?

7. Do you think that you got benefits from giving and receiving comments to/from your classmates in your online journals? If you have any special feeling about giving and receiving comments, explain your answer.

8. Do you feel that the interaction in the online journaling led to a deeper personal relationship with your classmates and to your professional development? Explain your answer.

9. When you finished the course, did you want to continue the practice of online journal writing or blog writing? Have you done so? Please explain your answer.

10. If you have any ideas or opinions about the online journals that you feel were not covered by this questionnaire, please feel free to share them.

3.5   Method of data analysis

The content of the posted online journals and interview responses were analyzed using theories stated in chapter 2 as a background (see Table 3.2). It consists of three parts as follows:

- Part 1: Analysis of the journal from three different dimensions

- Part 2: Analysis of the participants' answers to the questionnaire

- Part 3: Analysis of 5 participants' journals and answers

In part one, all the journals were analyzed from three different dimensions – the *metacognitive* dimension, the *affective* dimension and the *social* dimension – in order to reveal the autonomous behaviours of participants (See Section 4.2). Among the three dimensions, the metacognitive dimension and the affective dimension are taken from the conceptual framework of Wenden (See Table 2.1) and the social dimension is added by the researcher using the concepts of the social aspect of learner autonomy (Little 1996; Kaikonen 2001; and Kohonen 1992; Watson Todd 2001 and Gerhard 1999) (See Section 2.4).

The framework used in Part One is described in Table 3.2, which follows.

Table 3.2   Three dimensions of learner autonomy

Dimension	Kind	Aspects
Metacognitive	Person	Cognitive factors that facilitate learning
		Affective factors that facilitate learning
	Strategic	Effective strategies to particular tasks
		General principles to determine strategy choice
	Task	Task purpose or significance
		Nature of language and communication
		Need for deliberate effort
		Task demands
		- knowledge required to do the task
		- how to complete a task: steps and strategies
		- level of difficulty
Affective		Willingness to take on responsibility
		Confidence in their ability as learners
Social		Cultural awareness
		Collaborative interaction

(Adapted from Wenden 1991; Little 1996; Kaikonen 2001; Kohonen 1992; Watson Todd 2001 and Gerhard 1999.)

In the *metacognitive* dimension, metacognitive knowledge expressed in the journals is grouped into three categories: *person* knowledge, *task* knowledge and *strategic* knowledge, as stated by Wenden (1991). After that, the relationship between each kind of knowledge expressed in the journals and learner autonomy is described. In the *affective* dimension, two major attitudes towards learner autonomy (Wenden 1991) – 'willingness to take responsibility for their own learning' and 'confidence in their language learning ability' – are revealed by the extracts from the journals. In the *social* dimension, 'cultural awareness' and 'collaborative interaction' are described. 'Collaborative interaction' is categorized into categories adapted from Watson Todd (2001) and Gerhard (1999) (See Section 2.3).

In the following list, each category is accompanied by an example from the journals to illustrate the use of the categories in the analysis.

Inviting to discuss	"I think, you may also have some ideas concerning with my topic. I warmly want to receive your suggestions and opinions how to solve this problems."
Empathizing	"When I read your journal, I find there are so many points I agree with you, as I got the same problem in English learning."
Encouraging	"I have to say you are one of persons in class who make great progress in L2. I always admire your passion and courage for learning L2."
Asking for clarification	"Do you mean that after the teacher gives the feedback, the student has to respond by making changes to his/her writing based on the feedback?"
Agreeing	"I agree with your opinion on writing theory."
Suggesting	"When I will end my journal, I want to tell my friends: Keep writing is a habit, as [one teacher] said, a good writer is a good reader."
Adding information	"I am also interested in this topic — it is essential in ELT, especially with English as a world language. Moreover, language can not be separated from culture, but affect each other."
Evaluating	"......you really did a wonderful job together with your great partner. We all did benefit from your demonstration. Seen from your teaching, I for certain believe you will be a good teacher like our nice [teacher]!"
Supporting	"You seem to approach some topics from a romantic and pasionate point of view, which is often quite refreshing because most of the theories we read about in articles are quite cold, calculated and to the point."
Exploring	"I have not read much on this topic but I do think we all benefit from your research once you finish. I often use peer review in teaching writing but I have not really recognize how much my students learn from their friends' comments."

(Adapted from Watson Todd (2001) and Gerhard (1999))

In Part Two, all the interview responses concerning the participants' perceptions about the online journals were analyzed (see Section 4.3). Their answers

to each question are described in terms of positive and negative attitudes towards online journal writing, and suggestions they made about the course or the survey are discussed. The connection between the responses and the concept of autonomy is also brought out clearly.

In Part Three, the journals and the interview responses of 5 participants are chosen to analyze in order to observe individual autonomous learning behaviour (see Section 4.4). The journals of 5 participants, 3 from Group 1 and 2 from Group 2 (See Table 3.1) were chosen. The learners are chosen as different in age, nationality, learning background and teaching experience in order to investigate the 'multidimensional construct' of autonomy. Of the journals they wrote during the course, 2 representative journals per participant were chosen to analyze from the perspective of the three abovementioned dimensions; *metacognitive*, *affective* and *social* dimension, and their responses to the questions were analyzed.

3.6   Conclusion

This chapter provides information about the research methodology employed to reveal how student teachers of an ELT program show autonomous learning behaviour through online journal writing. The data in this research was collected from online journals and through an email interview. The data from the journals were analyzed from the perspective of the *metacognitive*, *affective* and *social* dimensions. The data obtained from the email interview were discussed through their positive and negative perspective on their experience of online journal. In the following chapter, the researcher discusses the results of the analysis of online journals from two graduate class groups and the students' personal perspectives on the online journal writing they did for the writing course. The focus in analyzing both data sources is especially on the autonomy shown by the students in keeping online journals for their writing class.

Chapter 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

This thesis reports the findings of two resources, online journals and email interviews of MA-ELT student teachers at a university in Thailand. In this chapter, the researcher first discusses the findings of her observations of the online journals and then evaluates the perceptions of the participants about their journaling experience as revealed by the email interview. The purpose of the data analysis is to find out the autonomous characteristics in the students journals by observing how they reflect on and express their experience and knowledge, how they write to show their attitude, motivation, willingness and responsibility, and what benefits they get from the responses given by their classmates to their online journal postings.

In the first part of the chapter (Section 4.2), the collected journal data has been analyzed as a whole in order to delimit the range of *metacognitive, affective* and *social* factors expressed by the participants as a collectivity. The researcher has interpreted these data with the framework illustrated in chapter 3 (see Table 3.2).

In the second part of the chapter (Section 4.3), the perceptions of the participants about their online journal writing experience, as revealed by their questionnaire responses, are discussed.

In the third part of the chapter (Section 4.4), the researcher studies the cases of five individual participants in order to show different forms of autonomous learning behaviours which are likely related, at least in part, to their differing national cultures.

Sample online journal entries for Group 1 and Group 2 are attached in Appendix 1 and 2, respectively. The full set of online journals can be found in Appendix 3, recorded on CD. *(Note: spelling and grammar errors which appear in the journals have not been corrected, since the focus is on the content. In the example*

journal extracts discussed below, the following symbols are used: 'P' = participant, 'J' = journal entry, 'T' = teacher, and the name in square brackets [ ] replaces the real name of the participants and teacher).

4.2 Analysis of participants' journals: *Metacognitive, affective* and *social* factors related to learner autonomy

4.2.1 *Metacognitive* Dimension

In the *metacognitive* dimension, the researcher describes the range of knowledge expressed by the student teachers who are the participants of this study using the analytical framework outlined (see Table 3.2). Knowledge is categorized as *person knowledge, strategic* knowledge and task knowledge. Within each of these categories, clusters of related knowledge are identified. These knowledge clusters are illustrated by brief statements extracted from the journals.

4.2.1.1 *Person* knowledge

Person knowledge in this study is related to the learners' knowledge about the cognitive and affective factors that facilitate their own learning (Wenden 1991: 35). This type of discourse is generally signaled by their use of the first person. In the journals in the present research, the participants express their awareness about personal factors such as age, sociocultural factors, cognitive styles and learning styles. Exemplary extracts are given from the participants' journals, along with any comments of their peers.

In the following extract, the participant noted that in the first part of the course his age and culture were confusing to other classmates. He did not, however, reveal any effect these factors may have had on his learning.

> I could understand her confusion, because for one, I wasn't Asian looking as all the other students on the course, secondly I'm definitely older looking and thirdly I walked into their classroom halfway through their MA ELT program (P20-J1).

In another statement, he expresses the thought that there is no connection between

being a native speaker of English and being a good student.

> Being a native speaker of English doesn't necessarily make me the best
> student in class, because we have many great students in our class. Although I
> can speak English well and I have an advantage with a certain genre's
> vocabulary, I still have to work as hard as all the other students in our class
> (P20-J1).

But one of his classmates commented positively and reflectively on his appearance

and his manner of self-expression:

> The way you put your ideas and words is also very "English" - I usually find
> this in English novels. You seem to be a literature man.
> Yes, having you in our class is just equally fun. Surely, we all can learn from
> you, very exprienced (not necessarily OLD) and (somehow) native and (quite)
> open (P16 comment on P20-J1).

On the other hand, most of the participants, especially the Chinese, reveal not only

their identity, but its relation to their learning. That is, they mostly believe that their

L1 has a great impact on their English language writing.

> I think for the most ESL students have the same 'feeling' about composing.
> Because we have different language and different culture, those elements
> influence the composing process deeply (P2-J1).

> The author describes a Chinese student's feeling when he writes compositions
> with L1 and L2. When I read this article, I have the same feeling about
> composing in L2.The Chinese student describes his writing process (P2-J1).

The participants sometimes show awareness of their cognitive style. They try

to understand their own cognitive style by reflecting on the articles they have read and

by reading their friends' journals. In the following three examples, two profess that

they are 'brainstormers', and one of them keenly feels the plight of that type of writer

in a timed writing situation. The third uses a process metaphor 'movie in my head' to

talk about her way of reading.

> With the idea of this article, I am thinking about myself. Am I a type of
> outliner or a brainstormer? To what extent I can attribute myself to a certain
> type? How do I perform in the whole writing process? Do I construct meaning
> before a formal writing, or discover meaning during a mess of drafts? Looking

back my experiences about writing, most time I tried to come up with an outline after I finished a draft of writing, in other words, I like to start writing as soon as I receive a kind of writing task. To be sad, in reality, most writing assignments have time restriction. Most time I find what I write down is not what I really want to write, but I have no time to rewrite and revise. From the viewpoint of theory, I may belong to the type of brainstormer which discovers meaning through several drafts writing (P8-J1).

i am 200%brainstormer! i never write well if i follow any outline i wrote before >_<!! (P6 comment on P8-J1).

Reading is a developmental process for me. It is a movie in my head. I start by reading the first passage carefully and slowly (P5-J1).

Since individuals are different, they have different learning styles. Some participants reveal their awareness of their own learning style, take advantage of this knowledge and find the best ways to profit from their learning style. They especially present how they learn to improve their language skills, especially their writing skills.

I like writing, in my mother tongue for sure O(∩_∩)O. I used to write those unforgettable experiences I have got. Mostly are my journey, my teaching, my students and my life. I like to record the nice moment in words as people take photos. Whenever reread them, I am full of happiness (P6-J1).

I am interested in writing. I like to read the books since I was young and I wanted to become good writer. Practically, I am not good at writing in my L1 and L2. Although I have learned many grammar rules and vocabularies, I feel hesitant to write a paragraph or an essay. I am finding the way to improve my writing as well as to teach others about writing (P9-J1).

Since the course is Theory and Practice of Writing, participants mostly write about their difficulties and problems in the process of writing. It seems that they are not afraid to show their weaknesses and problems in their learning so that they can get suggestions from their classmates and teacher.

However, I am troubled by writing, because lack of linguistic knowledge and other background knowledge (P14 comment on P16-J1).

As writing come a long with thinking, sometimes, it took me for ages to finish one assingnment because I am aslo the beginner who is being trained how to think (P13-J2)!

Planning for their learning is important in the autonomous learning process. Some speculation about the way to plan actions to solve writing problems is revealed in the entries.

> As to myself, I couldn't identify right order for illustrating in English writing. I guess the reason is that English is the second language for me, and I am not good at mastering it. In L2 writing, I always translate my L1 into L2, but ignore the potential rules in meaning discourse. .....
> To solve problems, I have to accumulate as many as I can – the more we read, the better we write (P14-J2).

They also write about their experiences and difficulties in the class and their thoughts about how to handle these difficulties:

> I'm still kind of wondering my topic of research paper, what is the specific topic…but I think aftter today's class I will be wiser (?) at least I hope so… (P17-J1).

> But I'm so embarrased that I hadn't write any of the summary yet, because of the misunderstanding. ☺ thank you [teacher], you gave me a chance to remedy my mistake (P15-J2).

> My problem is that I do not have a lot of time for reading about teaching theory so do you think it is better to get actual experience in a classroom environment or to l earn through studying (P21-J2).

> Moreover, while preparing this presentation, I happened to read a lot of writing models which are very interesting and give me a lot of ideas (P23-J3).

Their previous learning experiences and their effect on their present learning situation were also discussed.

> I remember the time I studied at university, I hate writing lesson because it was rather boring and we were given 'chance' to be lazy (P16-J1).

> I think, I was good at memorizing and I always stood in the first position in the class from primary to high school. I, myself remarked that I was better than others but i did not noticed that I was blocked of my critical thinking and creative sense during in the school (P13-J1).

To summarize, in the above extracts, the participants showed their knowledge about themselves; personal appearance, sociocultural factors, cognitive styles, learning styles, difficulties and previous learning experiences. They noticed that this

kind of person knowledge plays a significant role in their learning process. Some of factors facilitate their learning and some factors obstruct their learning. The presence of this knowledge can help them to understand themselves more and thus they can find ways to improve their own learning based on their existing personal factors.

4.2.1.2 *Strategic* knowledge

Strategic knowledge in this study is concerned with the stored knowledge that learners have about learning strategies. It consists of knowledge regarding strategies that work best and knowledge about how best to approach language learning (Wenden 1991: 38). In the journals of the present research, the participants express their awareness of the strategies of successful language learners, and which strategies they use for their own learning and sometimes in teaching. These extracts are taken from the participants' journals and from comments given by their peers.

The participants are aware of themselves as learners and describe their beliefs about strategies that work best for learners and what kind of strategies they have been using for their own learning. In the following extract, the strategy of organizing one's knowledge and planning to learn writing in an effective and efficient way can be seen.

> I must say that writing is the skill which requires most energy and thoughts. We have to collect all the linguistic knowledge and other background knowledge we possess (P16-J1).

The use of a cognitive strategy, that is, making lists of "jargon" for learning the concepts of ELT from the teachers, can be seen in the following extract.

> I find myself making lists of jargon as I listen to [my teachers] in the class, go home and read up on what they have discussed, because I recognize the words, but the meaning eludes me (P20-J1).

In the following extract, the participant becomes aware of her own use of a writing strategy after reflecting on the article she has read about writing.

> With the idea of this article, I am thinking about myself. Am I a type of outliner or a brainstormer? To what extent I can attribute myself to a certain type? How do I perform in the whole writing process? Do I construct meaning

before a formal writing, or discover meaning during a mess of drafts? Looking back my experiences about writing, most time I tried to come up with an outline after I finished a draft of writing, in other words, I like to start writing as soon as I receive a kind of writing task.

Since they are student teachers, the participants are also aware of themselves as teachers. The following extracts show their awareness of strategies related to teaching, that is, selecting materials and motivating students.

> Teacher should realize that how to select suitable supporting materials for them, how to motivate and encourage them for learning writing as much as possible (P16-J1).

> I think that giving them have more motivation for writing is rather difficultly for some student who dislike writing ,feel bore and lazy to write a lot (P16-J1).

In the following extract, the participant becomes aware of the teaching strategy used by the teacher in the class, which is that of asking students to prepare for the next class. She takes her own teacher as a model for using this strategy with her Teaching Practice students.

> I also ask my students to prepare for next class in my TP (P12-J1).

From the above extracts from journals, the participants' knowledge about learning and teaching strategies can be observed. They express their beliefs about good strategies and their knowledge of the strategies that work best for their own learning and teaching context. They become more aware of how some factors appear to facilitate their learning, while some factors obstruct it.

4.2.1.3 *Task* knowledge

Task knowledge in this study is the expression of the learners' knowledge of the procedures that constitute the learning tasks and that are needed to accomplish them successfully. It includes knowledge of the purpose of the task, knowledge of the nature of the task, knowledge of when deliberate learning is required and knowledge of task demands (Wenden 1991).

In the journals in the present research, the participants reflect on the tasks they have to do in the class, including both the tasks of a learner and the tasks of a teacher. The extracts are taken from the participants' journals and from comments given by peer participants.

In the following extracts, the participants reflect on the assignments they have to do in the class, which are reading articles, writing summary, peer-teaching using a genre approach and writing a research paper. They show their understanding of the purpose and benefit of doing these tasks and their effects on their learning.

> The article shows us a good example for teaching L2 writing. In short, I benefit quite a lot from this class (P12-J1).

> Having a chance to write Journal is the great thing for me from taking MA.ELT. It makes me love writing more, and less nervous (P23-J1).

> Doing a research paper is a good example – in order to finish a research proposal in this trimester, each of us must study with our research topic in terms of finding materials or references, and then, find out the problems within your topic, say why it's important, seek for the solution to your questions and check it works or not (P14-J1).

> When I write the research proposal, my thought is wrong. It takes a long time for me. For the research paper, I've to find out the other quotes and read another books. Two articles that I've already read are not enough to write my research paper. Before writing the research, I thought it could be finished within a few hours. Totally wrong!! (P19-J2).

Although they show the difficulty of the task they are doing, such as writing research paper, they also know the benefit of doing the task.

The participants also express their beliefs about the teaching tasks involved, teaching writing, giving feedback to students, the role of the teacher and the role of students.

> Teachers should select what is going to be taught and design relevant activities. (P12-J1)

> Really I want to focus on how feedback can be given effectively because I think this will help me to become a good teacher. (P21-J1)

> I also find the topic of genre in writing very interesting, as well as useful, because I can use it with my own writing students. (P20-J1)

As I believe the ultimate goal of every form of education and skill training is learner autonomy. The smaller role the teacher has, the better it is for students to learn on their own. (P16-J2)

In the above extract, the participant's awareness of learner autonomy, the teacher's role in fostering student autonomy and its effect were expressed. Her belief about the role of the teacher is a bit radical, in that she seems to feel the teacher should have almost no role in learner autonomy.

In the above examples, the participants show their knowledge and awareness about tasks, including activities done in their class and tasks related to teaching. They state their knowledge of the purpose and benefit of the task they are doing, the difficulty of the task, and the resources necessary to complete the task. Being aware of themselves as teachers, they express their concern about the tasks of the teacher, the overall role of the teacher and the goal of education.

Findings from the above three kinds of knowledge in the *metacognitive dimension* show that the participants have and can express their knowledge and beliefs about personal factors, strategies and tasks that facilitate their learning and teaching environment.

4.2.2 Affective Dimension

Using the analytical framework outlined in Chapter Three (Table 3.2), in the *affective dimension* in Part One the researcher describes the attitudes expressed by the student teachers who are the participants of this study. Two main attitudes towards learner autonomy expressed by the participants are their *willingness to take on responsibility* and their *confidence in their ability to learn and teach language*. Within each of these two categories, clusters of related knowledge are identified. These attitudes are represented by brief statements extracted from the journals.

4.2.2.1 Willingness to take responsibility

The participants' willingness to take responsibility for their own learning can be seen in the motivitation and feelings they express in their journals. They are motivated by seeing themselves as having an important role in the language learning process.

> Actually, I am bit excited to write journal online. How thoughtful our teacher is? Now, she is not the only one reader of our journal and all of you become my audience. I am so glad for that (P13-J1).

> I find the classes very stimulating and enjoy dipping into [teacher]'s wealth of knowledge regarding the subject of writing and genre (P20-J1).

> But week by week, they [the participant's students] were getting used to it and even enjoy writing journals. I was so happy to see them getting the same feeling like me on the journals though it 's still a tiring chore for them. Seeing them change their opinions on writing (not all,but I am still happy)make me feel that teaching is really rewarding ,sometimes (P23-J2).

The above extracts show the participants being stimulated by their role in language education not only as learners, but also as teachers. However, as the extracts below indicate, they are also consciously aware of their responsibility toward their future students and toward their country's education system. Their serious reflections about their own educational systems show their ability to do serious critical thinking in this area, suggesting that they are likely to work for change when they return home. These are thus very mature examples of the participants' autonomous thinking about teaching.

> We may become teachers. Then our responsibility is for our students. They may need us to practice the theory we learnt in class. We may have to take pains to our teaching. Even though, we may face lot of conflict between the ideal teaching theory we learnt and the realistic problem of education system. We've learnt it, so that it is our responsibility to overcome it (P6-J10).

> Everything is changing around the world, But how pitiful for the students who are in [our country] remain in the worst Education System and who are being blocking their thinking and concepts. Who I have to blame for it? I have to blame the government or the teacher or the textbook which is older than me or myself????????? (P13-J1).

On the other hand, students are also articulate in expressing their loss of motivation

specifically for their writing when they face too many difficulties in the process.

> That's totally absurd. Though I still have more to do but this upset my so
> much. This really kills my mood of continuing any writing more now(P3-J10).

> I do not have much time for me. I have to spend a lot of time on my reading
> and writing I do not want to start again (P-10-J8).

> But at the time I cannot use computer or the computer does not work, I feel
> like I cannot write anything and I don't want to write with pen or pencil. Does
> technology make me lazier? (P9-J8)

4.2.2.2 Confidence in their ability as learners

Some participants show their confidence by being expressly aware of improvements

that have occurred while they attended the course.

> However, I am so proud of myself that I have improved in writing compare
> with time before I came here. …. I am sure after this course, I will not be
> afriad of writing (P13-J2).

> I hope after this course, I can teach writing, the supposed most difficult skill
> among the four, better (P16-J1).

On the other hand, some of the participants expressed their weakness and low

confidence in their learning and teaching process. One of them has even become

aware of her difficulties writing in L1; thus, she uses an avoidance strategy in English,

even when writing emails:

> First, I have a problem in writing not only in English in my own language too.
> I have no ides for writing and how to set. Second, my grammar is not good so
> an afraid to write, even with my friend I never chat in internet. I just send
> short message to them (P10-J1).

A second one can express in great detail what troubles her about writing in English:

> Writing! Oh! It is terrible for me! I don't like writing that why I thought it
> terrible, so I have a lot problem with writing cause from this feeling…..
> The first problem is grammatical. That seem easy for other but it isn't for
> me….
> The second problems that also make headache was the choosing the
> vocabulary which appropriate one….
> The big problems for me are the process of writing. (P4-J1)

Finally, as a practice teacher P4 fears that her own weakness in English is affecting her students negatively.

> I felt very sorry to them. May be I am not good enough in teaching that why make them confused (P4-J9).

If P4's and P10's early journal entries (J1, see above) are compared with their late ones (J10 below), it is found that one of them (P4) sees changes in her attitude and learning process, while another (P10) seems to be still constructing her confidence. Both of them, however, show a development in their ability to talk about where they are in their learning and increased fluency in doing so. In this sense, both have become more confident and aware as learners.

> In the first time when I knew we have to write online journal every week. I felt not comfortable, because I did not know what the area should I write?
> But now my felling is change. I enjoy with online journal a lot. I learnt many things from all of us online journal. For example I knew new vocabulary, writing style and the different of our culture (P4-J10).

> We were present about information report. I feel not good. I have a problem in presentation. I like say sorry to my partner because I cannot do well. Still not confident I do not know why. I like to say thank you to all of my friends for your comment. This is a first time to work with stranger. I have never easy to get friendly with stranger and especially man. I am so sorry; I am not friendly with you. I have to take time to get friendly (P10-J10).

The participants find their own ways to strengthen their skills, expect changes in their learning process, and hope that they will become more skillful and thus confident. It can be said that by articulating their problems so clearly, the participants are showing their will to accept the challenge of learning, even as they temporarily doubt themselves.

> For my first week I felt very excited because I known that I'm not very good in writing but I thought if i try maybe it can be better (P5-J1).

> Of course, my English is really poor as well as my knowledge so that I can not express my feelings and emotion freely. Will someone laugh at me? I ask myself sometimes. No one laughs at me even if I have some stupid accents and wrong pronunciation in my life. They often correct me friendly when I communicate with them (P7-J1).

In the affective dimension, two main attitudes towards autonomous learning found in the journals are described: willingness to take responsibility for their learning and confidence in their ability as learners. According to Wenden (1991), "learners whose attitudes towards autonomy are positive will try to become more responsible in their learning and those whose attitudes are negative will not." Their positive and negative attitudes may depend on their experiences on socialization process with their peers and teachers in the past. It may or may not change by the socialization with their peers and teacher in the present learning situation. Their social interactions in the online journal are shown in the next section.

4.2.3 Social Dimension

In the *social dimension,* the expressions of cultural awareness and of collaboration among the learners found in the journals are described.

4.2.3.1 Cultural awareness

The participants in the class are multi-national. The interdependent nature of their learning can be seen in their very conscious awareness of their own culture, the culture of their friends and intercultural issues, as evidenced by the following journal extracts:

> Reading your entry brings me a lot of pleasure. Your background is very interesting. The way you put your ideas and words is also very "English" - I usually find this in English novels. You seem to be a literature man (P16 comment on P20-J1).

> This topic comes to me as part of my love for Intercultural issues. Since I was small, I have been interested in understanding cultures of my country, ... and other countries. I like the stories that show the lifes, people and thinking - living styles of different places (P11-J2).

> A short amusing reference to cultural differences; In South Africa it's quite common for people to point at things (even at food sometimes) with their feet. In Asia, especially in Thailand it's a big NO-NO! (P20 comment on P11-J2).

According to Kohonen (1991), awareness and understanding of one's own and others' culture make interaction more effective. Moreover, understanding of culture is an essential characteristic of a good teacher. In the following interaction, the participants' awareness of the use of the word 'Dear' to the teacher in their own culture and in the L2 culture can be seen. Other classmates also show awareness on that topic and express the new knowledge gained from reading it.

> For example, Thai culture, students can't use word "Dear" with their Thai teachers, because it is an unapt or impolite word, if we use with adults and teachers. Almost Thai people use this word with their boyfriends, girlfriends, and couple. When I read all of your journals, I wondered that why you can use this word with your teacher. Now I have already known that western students can use "Dear" with their teacher. [Teacher] told me that, *It is not at all impolite to call your teacher "dear" in my culture with a little personal meaning but not too much.* I think that there is only Thai culture which has different usage from the other countries around the world. (P18-J5)

> I've learned something from reading your journal. I've been here in Thailand now for 9 years and famed that my knowledge of the Thai culture is pretty fair. But, I've never known that Thai students were not allowed to start their letters to their teachers with a greeting of: Dear ...,
> Thanks for this information. (P20 comment on P18-J5)

4.2.3.2 Collaboration

The interdependent nature of learning can be seen in collaborative interactions that occur in journal entries and responses. They are categorized into the following themes described in Chapter 3 (See Section 3.5).

Inviting to discuss

The participants initiate various topics related to teaching and learning, and then invite their classmates to discuss these topics. These kinds of expressions arouse the interest of others and, at such times, create a collaborative environment in the journals. The following extract shows the writer expressing her attitude and struggle with writing, and then reaching out to the others for their own ideas and attitudes:

… so now I am still thinking and seeking and also struggling in how to write more academically. I wish one day we could find our way, but now my friends, what about you? (P2-J4).

Most often they invite others by asking their opinion with informal question as mentioned above; other times they request other participants' suggestions and opinions more overtly.

I think, you may also have some ideas concerning with my topic. I warmly want to receive your suggestions and opinios how to solve this problems (P13-J1).

I am happy to receive any of your suggestions, questions, opinions and comments on this topic. If you know any materials that are helpful for my topic, or anyone who has experience in this issue. please let me know (P11-J2).

Empathizing and encouraging

As the participants express their difficulties and problems in their learning process and teaching, the teacher and other participants show empathy to them. This can increase the writer's motivation and willingness to write more.

When I read your journal, I find there are so many points I agree with you, as I got the same problem in English learning (P6 comment on P7-J1).

About not finding the right logical order: I think everybody struggles with that when writing. Never mind, keep struggling and you'll find it! (T comment on P14-J2).

Asking for clarification

When the participants' ideas or expressions in journals are not clear, other participants ask questions to better understand the meaning of the post. Many of the clarifications of meanings about ideas are given by the teacher. this process can make the participants more critical about what they write.

Writing checklists? What kind? they could be for evluating writing according to certain criteria. Is that what you mean? Sure you'll find something in the literature. Check out T. Hedge, oh, a chapter called Writing in a methodology book. I can give you a copy. Remind me (T comment on P21-J1).

Is it [P17]? Bring something from China for us! How long are you going? Where exactly in China are you going? It's too vast a country to just say you're going to China (P16 comment on P17-J1).

Agreeing

The participants often show their agreement on the journal postings which give opinions about theories, writing the research paper, the classroom environment, and so on. This gives a sense of oneness within the group, and promotes bonding, too.

> I agree with your opinion on writing theory (P12-J1).

> I agree with you, progress in writing proficiency can not be achieved through feedback without teacher or student because both of them play the important role in teaching and learning process - teacher is guide for student and student is object for teacher (P14 comment on P12-J2).

> I agree with you. We can learn how to teach writing from the way we are now being taught by [teacher] (P16 comment on P11-J3).

> Yes, [P3] I agree. When I read article that [teacher] has given to us, I found that my methods are not that wrong or weird (P17 comment on P3-J2).

Suggesting

Sometimes the participants suggest to their classmates what to do with what the writer has presented. This can help the writers find new ways of approaching their work. Sometimes the teacher may negotiate between the writer of the journal and those who gave comments.

> [P3], one comment for this journal: PLEASE DON"T WRITE YOUR JOUNRAL IN ONE LONG PARAGRAPH. I'd prefer small paragraphs to read easily. (P11 comment on P3-J1)

> When I will end my journal, I want to tell my friends: Keep writing is a habit, as [one teacher] said, a good writer is a good reader. (P7-J1)

> [P16]'s broader view of brainstorming might be useful to you. You don't have to do all in the same class. Variety can be used depending on the purpose of the brainstorming. (T comment on P14-J2)

> Find time to do both at your best. Money is important! Experience is important! Theory is important. hihi. I personally think that you can reduce your work load somwhow so that you can have more time for studying, which will take only some months. Working takes your whole life. (P16 comment on P21-J2)

Supporting and adding information

The participants support and add more information to what their classmates have presented in the journals. Therefore new knowledge is constructed on the existing knowledge in both the writer and the reader through supporting and adding information on the existing knowledge or beliefs.

> I am also interested in this topic — it is essential in ELT, especially with English as a world language. Moreover, language can not be separated from culture, but affect each other (P14 comment on P11-J2).

> You mentioned reflection and I believe that reflection is one of the best tools in a classroom for student and teacher alike. Through reflection we can evaluate our success in class as teachers, as well as make sense of what we encounter in class and books as students (P20 comment on P11-J3).

> You seem to approach some topics from a romantic and pasionate point of view, which is often quite refreshing because most of the theories we read about in articles are quite cold, calculated and to the point (P20 comment on P3-J2).

Evaluating

The participants evaluate the abilities of their classmates, their performance in the classroom, and the opinions expressed in their journals. They are almost always positive evaluations. These kinds of positive evaluations may help the writer or the performer increase his/her motivation and give the person more confidence in his/her ability.

> Dear [P23], you really did a wonderful job together with your great partner. We all did benefit from your demonstration. Seen from your teaching, I for certain believe you will be a good teacher like our nice [Teacher]! (P14 comment on P23-J3).

> I was amazed by your journal writing. You wrote so nicely and very professionally too. You did reflect clearly about things happenning in the class last night with persuasive comments (P11 comment on P14-J4).

> I've also enjoyed reading your journal entry. I like your wit and writing style. Moreover, your journal illustrated logically, as well as was filled in personal point of view, so it is at all times looked alive. (P12 Comment on P12-J1)

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> I think it's important to go into what was commented on (evaluated). It's not just bla-bla, but it's very specific, which would make the reader believe the writer is sincere; thus, it would have a positive effect on the reader. Thus, again, it's important for you to bring out the specifics in this part.

Exploring

The participants explore the ideas and opinions presented by their classmates. This shows their interest in each others' topics.

> I have not read much on this topic but I do think we all benefit from your research once you finish. I often use peer review in teaching writing but I have not really recognize how much my students learn from their friends' comments. But for sure, they will be a great support! (P11 comment on P16-J2).

In the *social* dimension, the participants' cultural awareness and collaborative interaction are revealed. They show their awareness of their own culture and of the culture of others. Cultural awareness not only makes the communication more effective but also prepares these student teachers to become culturally sensitive which is a needed quality for their teaching. The collaborative interactions are mostly carried out by the students. These interactions have a positive effect on the individual's motivation, confidence, and knowledge building, and it brings about bonding within the group.

In Part One, the autonomous characteristics of student teachers are described from the metacognitive, affective and social dimensions. This form of description gives a holistic view of learner autonomy in the student teachers as a group. In the next section, the participants' own personal responses to the journaling situation are probed. In the process, they have a chance to show their own individuality about the autonomous environment as well as to comment directly on the meaning of autonomy for them.

4.3   Analysis of participants' interview responses

In Part Two, the responses to the questionnaire concerning the students' perceptions on their online journal writing experience were analyzed.   The answers to each question were categorized in terms of positive and negative attitudes towards their experience of online journal writing.

All of the participants were sent interview questions by email to survey their perceptions on online journal writing (see interview questions, Section 3.4.2).   After several reminders, the researcher succeeded in getting 18 out of 23 students' responses to the questions.   The responses are summarized in following table (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Summary of interview responses: Participants' perspectives on online journaling and learner autonomy

Categories \ Participants	1	2	3	4	6	7	8	9	10	11	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	23
Previous journal writing experience	-	+	-	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	+
Previous blog writing experience before the course	-	-	-	-	+	-	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	+
Attitude about writing online journals	+	+	±	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	±	+	+
Benefits from writing online journals	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+
Assistance in being an autonomous learner	+	+	±	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	±	+
Benefits from giving and receiving comments to/from classmates	+	+	+	+	+	±	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	±	+
Feeling about connection between interaction to deeper personal relationship	+	+	±	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	±	-
Feeling about connection between interaction to rofessional development	+		+	-		+	+	+			-	+	-		+	-	-	+
Desire to continue the practice of online journal writing or blog writing	+	+	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	-	-	+
Further ideas or opinions about online journals	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	-

(+) positive answers, (-) negative answers, (±) mixed or unclear ( ) not answered

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Previous journal writing experience

This question was asked in order to find out the participants' background, which might affect their perspectives on online journal writing.

According to the survey, 7 out of 18 participants answered that they had experienced journal writing in their previous education. They expressed a positive attitude toward and good experience in writing journals in their previous education.

> Yes, we did journal writing in high school and I think it was good, it depends, how teachers sign it. I mean journal writing can be done in a different ways, like it might be very formal one or very informal one, it is done with topics or without topics. Anyway I think journal writing is good (P17).

> In my high school (grade 7-9), our Chinese teacher require us write in notebooks, at least twice a week. I wrote hundreds of journal at that time (P6).

Eleven participants who do not have journal writing experience simply said 'no' in answer to this question.

Previous blog writing experience before the course

The purpose of the question was to discover the participants' familiarity with online writing. When asked about their experience in writing blogs, 5 out of 18 participants answered that they had experienced blog writing before. Some of them had their own blogs.

> Yes, I have two blogs, both write in Chinese. I like writing my own experience, feelings, ideas and so on. (P6)

13 participants answered that they did not have previous blog writing experience. The response of one of the students shows that he was not familiar with online interaction at all:

> Sorry, but even now I don't know how to get to Facebook. So, blog is far from my frequent vocabulary. (P3)

Attitudes about writing online journals

Concerning their attitudes towards online journal writing, 16 out of 18 participants answered that they liked journal writing, especially online, as they could share their posts.

> Yes, very much. I think it's a great way to practice our writing without any stress or pressure. We had a chance to write anything we wanted, about our life, our country, our feelings, our friends….. At first I felt it's an exercise that I had to complete but after 2 or 3 weeks it became one of the enjoyable things I wanted to do every week – writing and reading my friends' journals. (P16)

> Yes, I took writing class with [teacher] and we did a lot of journal writing in paper and also online. I have loved it since then. And I am still practicing journal writings in every class that I am currently teaching. Journal writing helps the teacher to be able to read their students. It makes the teacher knows more about their kids and that's very important in being an effective teacher (P23).

Two participants gave unsure or confusing answers. The first one sounded neutral, while the latter one was fairly negative because the participant preferred more focused topic journals than the current open topics.

> At the beginning, I didn't like it much. But then, I thought it's ok (P3).

> I can't say yes or no. My once experience wasn't good. I might like it if the journal topic is more focused (P20).

Benefits from writing online journals

When asking about the benefits they have gotten from online journal writing, the majority of the participants, 17 out of 18 participants, gave positive answers and wrote the list of benefits they had gotten. Most of them liked to interact and share their experience, feelings and opinions with their classmates and thought that they got benefit from it. Only one participant stated that she did not get any benefit (P 17). Examples of some participants' answers are as follows:

> I received many benefits from the writing online journal. It helped me to be able to practice my writing skills in English and also I could share opinions, ideas, teaching and learning experiences of writing and useful comments from my friends to help me to learn and apply for my better writing as a teacher and student. (P18)

I think, we enjoy writing and sharing our own experience and personal feeling in online journals. Besides, I learned some culture from other classmates. (P2)

I learn a new way of sharing opinions and feelings among members of a group. I may apply it for my courses when I teach. I can make my friends understand and more about [my country] and me. I also understand my friends more. I learn to construct my ideas better so that readers can easily understand me. (P16)

Assistance in being an autonomous learner

Regarding their opinions on whether or not online journal writing helps them to become autonomous learners, 14 out of 18 participants answered that it helps. They mostly expressed the idea that they could learn from each other and that they could wrote freely what they thought. In other words, they learned autonomously by collaboration and self-regulation. One of the participants boldly stated that she is an autonomous learner.

Yes, more or less. Learn other's language styles and cultures in their journal, and so check some grammatical mistake in my mind and new words (P6).

I think I am an autonomous learner myself. Anyway, writing online journal did help me in the way that I learn from other people in the class. In addition, when I have to reflect on my own writing, I see the strong and weak points (P 16).

Two participants, however, answered that journaling does not help them become more autonomous, and 2 participants were unsure. One participant claimed that some people were 'faking' their autonomy by producing plagiarized journals. But the researcher could see no evidence of such a thing.

It could but the writing class journal didn't (P20).

I'm not sure about that. It is because I feel that some people didn't write by themselves. They copied the article from somewhere and posed it so that their friends can read (P21).

Benefits from giving and receiving comments to/from classmates

When asking whether they got benefits from giving and receiving comments to/from their classmates or not, 16 out of 18 participants answered that they got benefits from this kind of interaction.

Sure, it is like a communication between us. I was encouraged by the comments and wanted to write more. Often, it is not only feedback from my writing style but things I talked inside the journal concerning my feelings and life. Friends helped to share and to live more happily when I was in BKK (P11).

Of course, I did. Giving and receiving comments is also a technique that needs to be learnt. I felt more encouraged and fun when receiving comments from my friends. I think I contributed to the page by giving a lot of comments to my friends and make them feel positive all the time (P16).

Two participants gave negative answers to this aspect. The first one seems to like more critical comments and the second one seems to like more focused themes.

Well, not exactly, because I think everyone just said nice things for each other without even meaning it (P17).

The comment that I got wasn't about writing itself. So, I don't think that I can get the benefit from that (P21).

Feeling about connection between interaction and deeper personal relationship

Concerning their opinion about the connection between the interactions and personal relationships, 14 out of 18 participants answered that they deepened their personal relationships from the interaction in the journals. They remarked that they had opportunity to share experiences, feelings and opinions, and understand each other by writing these things in the journals, since they might not have a chance to discuss them in the class. The following extract shows the feeling about personal relationships:

Yes, as I mentioned above it gave us opportunities to talk about issues that we normally may not talk about in the classroom environment. Therefore it gave us opportunities to know each other better than we normally would (P1).

However, two participants gave negative responses and 2 participants responded with uncertainty.

No, because there is no deep things shared. Because everyone is so afraid about what other people will think about my writing (P17).

Well, I'm not so sure about that. One who gives lots of comments on your writing is not necessarily your best friend (P3).

Feeling about connection between interaction and professional development

When asked their opinion about the connection between interaction and professional development, 8 out of 18 participants answered that they deepened their professional development from the interaction in the journals, while 5 participants answered that they did not. Five participants did not give an answer for that part because of the way the researcher wrote the question; it was combined with the previous question. Thus, some participants' answers did not cover both questions. The following are examples of some responses:

> About professional development, I learn more about personalities and the way to deal with different personalities in a mixed class. I learn that people have different ways to express the same things. There may not be one way only (P16).

> We got deeper personal relationship with each other. That does not mean professional, but just improved (P15).

Desire to continue the practice of online journal or blog writing

According to the survey, 11 out of 18 participants wanted to continue online journal writing or blog writing after the end of the course. Most of them stated that they were willing to practice and continue online writing in order to improve their L2 writing skill. Some of them expressed the probability that they would create their own blog in L2. The following are some examples from their answers:

> Yes, I am going to create a blog of my own which totally write in English. (P6)

> Yes, I need. If I receive that chance, I can continue to practice more my writing skills in English as a foreign language which to be useful for everyone who need to improve and develop the writing skills in English. If we need to practice the writing, we have to write more. (P18)

Seven participants expressed their unwillingness to continue it. The following participant stated that she preferred a different medium to the online journal.

> No, I don't care much about that. I did it because it was an assignment. Normally, I write a lot in email and also I write comments to my friends on facebook and hi5. (P21)

Further ideas or opinions about online journals

When asking their further opinions and feelings about online journal, 7 out of 18 participants contributed their own opinions and feelings about it. These participants even thought of its application in their professional career. The following are examples of some participants' opinions:

> Yes, one question. It is a very good kind of writing practice for small class. I mean, in China, mostly the class is in big size, normally over 45 students in a class, how can we apply online journal n a big class? Any suggestion for management or revision? (P6)

> I love writing online journals. I will use this in my teaching writing in my class if possible. (P7)
> I think this invention is great. Online journal can be applied in any courses, not only in writing. However, now I am having a writing class of 34, I find it very hard to apply this way. May be it's more suitable with a small class. (P16)

> Like I said, it works in theory, but it doesn't work in practice. (P17)

> You should ask 'Do you think that the writing English is important for you/your job? Why? How do you feel when you have to talk with your classmates through the writing online and in the classroom? Do you think that which ones between speaking and writing English is the most important? Why? And which ones do you most like to do? Why? (P18)

According to their responses to the questionnaire, almost all of the participants like online journal writing, whatever their previous experiences had been. But, their perspectives on the benefit they got, feelings towards interactions, and willingness to continue writing online journal differ. The majority showed positive attitudes, whilst a minority gave opposite and unsure answers. As noted above, the negative answers seem to show that the respondent expected or preferred a focused task to write about or that their interpretation of their classmates' intentions was more critical and less accepting. In order to see individual learner differences, the journals of 5 participants are analyzed in the next section.

4.4 Analysis of five participants' journals

The third part of the chapter analyses the journals and questionnaire responses of five individual participants. The purpose of this part is to show different forms of autonomous characteristics which emerge as a result of the participants' personal and cultural background differences and which are likely related to their diverse attitudes towards online journal writing.

Of the 23 participants, 5 participants of different nationalities in each group have been chosen: 3 participants from Group 1 and 2 participants from Group 2. The journal topics they wrote about are various: topics about classroom assignments, classroom activities, learning experiences outside the classroom, their own learning process, teaching in related situations, personal feelings, different cultures, and special events, among others. Two representative journal entries about learning and teaching related topics have been chosen for the analysis of their relationship to learner autonomy.

4.4.1 Participant 1, Group 1

The participant is female and 31 years of age. She is Turkish, and she has previous teaching experience in home tutoring and in teaching conversation classes at ABAC. The following table is the record of her online journal entries.

Table 4.2   Summary of participant 1's journal entries

Journal No.	Date	Title	Length	Comments Received
1	20/1/09	Ethics and Morals	710	3
2	25/1/09	What does reading mean to you?	524	5
3	02/02/09	Where are we in our relationships to our students?	656	6
4	09/02/09	Homesicks?	318	3
5	14/02/09	Happy Valentines	379	5
6	25/02/09	Communication	404	4
7	02/03/09	A nice day out	377	4
8	10/03/09	The reader	393	4
9	17/03/09	[no title]	348	4
10	23/03/09	[no title]	802	7

Participant 1 posted her journals once a week, and there are altogether 10 journal entries for the 12-week course. Therefore, in regard to the journal writing task, it can be said that she took full responsibility for her own learning. Most of her writings were related to language learning and teaching. This shows that she emphasized her learning and professional development as a teacher. The length of the journals ranges between 300 and 800 words. Although the length of journal entries is not limited, her motivation in writing journal can be seen in the length of her journals. She received a certain number of comments from her teacher and classmates. It seems that her journals are interesting to her readers, and there was collaboration on her topics. Two of her journal entries are analyzed to bring out her autonomous behaviours.

In her Journal Entry 1, she gives insight into the situation of giving presents to teachers in school. She initiates the topic of ethics and morals in the education system in her country. First, she gives her own definition of the terms 'ethics' and 'morals', then she identifies the conflict between these terms when they are applied in society. Then she connects this knowledge to the common practice of giving presents to teachers in the government schools in her country. The main problem she identifies is that the giving of gifts can be a means of influencing the ethics of both the receiver (teachers) and the giver (parents). In conclusion, she presents an idea to solve that problem, which is that teachers should set values and morals as individuals and should maintain them while educating their students.

> I guess, I went too long on this matter, but to summarize my thoughts I can only say, as individuals we set values, morals and as teachers we should have these morals to educate kids well enough. Otherwise we only walk in the same circle and do not step further ahead for a better future. (P1-J1)

In this journal entry, the writer distances herself from the educational value in some schools of her country and evaluates the situation from her own individual point of

view. In parts of the entry not reproduced here, she shows her frustration with this situation by asking questions like "Why is that?", "So what happens if we do not behave ethically right? Or what kind of reactions we might get from others?", "It sounds like a game doesn't it?", "Is it really?" Her interest and enthusiasm on the issue of the qualities of a teacher can be seen in statements like "We often talk about the qualities of teachers with friends and I can't stop thinking about the teachers of **my country** who lack all kind of morals but still, they can be ethically accepted."

P1 received personal and affective comments from her classmates and her teacher. These kinds of comments may motivate her and build her confidence, and they appear to establish an informal and close relationship between the writer and the reader.

"This is an interesting topic," (P8 comment on P1-J1)

"Wow, well this is a minefield!" (T comment on P1-J1)

The following response shows that the reader has increased her knowledge after reading P1's journal entry, and she in turn shares her knowledge of her own country.

> Before reading the journal of [P1], i have not thought about the distinction between ethics and morals which seems too ordinary to ignore....
> I have the similar experience to [P1]'s. In China, teachers are considered as a career with a morally higher quality...........the similiar situation like [P1]'s country do exist." (P8 comment on P1-J1)

The teacher explored P1's topic, shared her own experience and invited other classmates to participate:

> I just want to make a personal comment: I receive gifts from my students all the time! (Especially the Chinese and Thai ones). I have assumed that I am simply following the customs of the culture from which the students come by accepting them. But [P1], who comes from a culture more like mine, is raising a moral/ethical issue about it! I assume she means gifts of more value than the ones I normally receive, though value is a relative thing too.
> I would be glad for others, including Chinese and Thai students, to comment!:-)
> (T comment on P1-J1)

The participant replied to the teacher by explaining the difference between receiving memorable and valuable presents.

> "Dear [teacher], I certanly did not mean small gifts or memorable souvenirs. It seems like they perticulary ask for more valuable products, generally precious jewelery. As for you, I am sure your students would like to give you something that you remember them by. These are extreme ends." (P1 comment on P1-J1)

The above interaction shows that the knowledge of the writer is negotiated through collaborative interaction between student and student and between student and teacher. The personal and affective comments help to establish rapport between them.

In her Journal Entry 2, P1 introduced the topic of reading. She explored the task of reading by examining whether it is a science or an art.

> As far as I know, what our brain does when we read can be explained scientifically. The cognitive process that one go through when reading to understand the meaning. So, if this is the case, could reading be called science?
> On the other hand, if one would like to read well, the steps that person should take can be explained as art of reading. This can be learned in L1 and L2. (P1-J2)

Then she presented her knowledge about reading as an art. The cognitive process of the reader, the characteristics of good readers and the communication between the reader and the writer in the process of reading are described.

> The most important factor is paying attention to what we read. If someone wants to read well at first she-he should pay attention at least this is what I do. ………
> Once I read a saying that good readers are what they read and bad readers read what they are. In fact this is so true. A good reading can be an act of love not an act of self love. …..
> Let's think about another case. Generally a good written novel gives us tasks to do. This allows us to be in the harmony with the book that we are reading. We may forget who we are while reading and become the character that writer wants us to be. … (P1-J2)

She concluded her journal entry by asking her classmates whether reading is a science or an art, and she asserted that the process of reading is an art for her.

So friends, what does reading mean to you? Do you consider it as a part of science or art? As for me it certainly is an art. An art that I find myself feel lost in it, an art that adds knowledge into my soul and takes me to the other's worlds. (P1-J2)

She received responses from her classmates and teachers. They explored her topic about reading process, shared their opinions and experiences about reading and evaluated her writing and thoughts.

In my personal reading world, I like reading in my first language, but when i leant about knowledge about reading in L1 and L2 more and more, I realized that reading process is a magic process in our brain which help us create a film in our mind with language. ... (P2 comment on P1-J2)

I think you are a good reader. I like reading just like you. however, I can not say I am a good reader. Especially, my reading speed is really slow in L2. It always takes a long time to read a book. For me, reading is to enjoy life. Since I began to read English books, I find out a lot a fun from different books not only novels but also our course books. So reading is a wonderful process to me. Don't mention science or knowledge, it's too specific. Just enjoy! ... (P7 comment on P1-J2)

Could i say like this: For those i like, reading is an art for me, for those i can't understand or be forced to read, reading is a science. I enjoy reading whatever i like! I do agree with you, "reading brings us to discover the world and share the thoughts with others" (P8 comment on P1-J2)

what does reading means to me? for me Reading can take me to everywhere that i read in the book. Sometime I had never been there before but when i read the book I can know everything that the book tell me. (P5 comment on P1-J2)

This topic engendered a lot of different thoughts, in the writer, [P1], but also in the readers of it who commented above. Actually, [P1] made so many different points that it would be difficult to comment on them all. ..... (T comment on P1-J2)

From the above comments, it can be seen that P1's journal topic stimulated the minds of a number of her classmates regarding their own reading process, and they also constructed knowledge in their responses. She got positive evaluations from her

classmates and teacher which may have motivated her to write more about her opinions.

In answering the questionnaire, P1 stated that she had had no journal writing experience before she attended this course, and that she enjoyed online journal writing very much. From online journal writing, she thought that she got opportunities to learn from others and to discuss issues that they normally might not have time to talk about at the university campus. Thus, she felt that it led to deeper personal relationships and professional development. She thought that it did help her to become an autonomous learner. She also thought that interaction with her classmates was good because they shared ideas, supported each other and disagreed on some topics. She stated that she wanted to continue online journal writing if everyone participated. Her answers to the questionnaire showed that she thought very positively about the task of online journal writing.

Based on her journal extracts and her answers, P1 thinks deeply about teaching-related matters and learning tasks. It can be supposed that she has confidence in her ability and willingness to take care of teaching and learning tasks. She is also a motivated person in her teaching and learning. Her collaborative interaction with the readers can be seen in the comments of her journal. Her perspective on the experience of online journal writing is positive and, therefore, she seems to perceive that there is a relationship between learner autonomy and the online journal writing experience.

4.2.2   Participant 4, Group 1

The participant is female and 24 years old. She is Thai, and her previous teaching experience is only in the Teaching Practicum course at Assumption University. The following table is the record of her online journal entries.

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Table 4.3   Summary of participant 4's journal entries

Journal No.	Date	Title	Length	Comments Received
1	25/1/09	Oh! It is terrible	465	6
2	30/1/09	First Days in AU	229	5
3	25/02/09	I found the students don't have confident!	320	3
4	25/02/09	Love is?	204	4
5	01/03/09	Which strategies appropriate for the learners groups work or individual work?	343	5
6	05/03/09	Become healthy	274	6
7	08/03/09	Spelling check is necessary	274	5
8	19/03/09	Lacking experience	416	5
9	27/03/09	My new world	229	1
10	29/03/09	[P4]: Online journal	281	1

Unlike participant 1, participant 4 did not regularly post journals weekly, but she wrote 10 journal entries altogether to fulfill the required assignment. Her journal topics are related to her learning process, her experience at university and her life experience. These journal topics show that she is concerned about her learning and professional development as a teacher. The length of the entries ranges between 200 and 465 words. She received a certain number of comments from her teacher and classmates. It seems that there was collaborative interaction of her classmates and teacher on her journal topics. Among the 10 journals she wrote, two of her journals have been chosen to reveal her position with regard to learner autonomy.

P4 started her journal, Journal 1, with the expression of her frustration about her writing, which is already made clear in the title she gave her entry. She described her problems in writing as grammar, vocabulary and process of writing. In describing her grammar problems, she brought up the difference between the grammar of L1 and L2. She critically reflected on her previous learning experience in high school and

was aware of the best strategy for her in writing. At the end of her journal, she invited

her classmates to give suggestions to her. She expressed her hope that she would

improve her writing after this course.

> Writing! Oh! It is terrible for me! I don't like writing that why I thought it terrible, so I have a lot problem with writing cause from this feeling....
> The first problem is grammatical. That seem easy for other but it isn't for me....
> The second problems that also make headache was the choosing the vocabulary which appropriate one....
> The big problems for me are the process of writing. .....
> This is my first online writing I hope we can share the ideas with you. Please give me feedback, comment I accept all of your feedback its will help me a lot. I hope I can get something from this course and I hopeful I can improve my writing, reading and speaking skills. (P4-J1)

The responses she got from her classmates were empathetic, shared similar

problems as hers, encouraged and gave suggestions about good strategies to help

solve her problems.

> I believe everyone have those kind of trouble in L2. The problem is we need time to accumulate as credit, we should keep practicing by reading, speaking and writing, sooner or later, the final station will be there. (P2 comment on P4-J1)

> Dear [P4], You are not confident! Actually, when I read this journal, I think your writing skill is good. You just need confidence! (P7 comment on P4-J1)

> Dear [P4], As far as I know, your English is not terrible. You can communicate well with your classmates. You can express your opinions and experiences in the class. You have many good ideas. (P9 comment on P4-J1)

> Dear [P4], what you consider as problems for you actually are problems for us, don't think it is easy for us,hhaha... (P8 comment on P4-J1)

> Your english is not bad..maybe i have same your problem because we are Thai right? First time when I was started to learn how to write in English, I felt very confused about structure it is difference from Thai ways. (P5 comment on P4-J1)

In her Journal 8, P4 showed her awareness of the roles of the teacher. She

listed the range of responsibilities of a teacher. Then she asserted that marking exam

papers is one of the important responsibilities of a teacher. She presented a paper-

marking problem she had faced in her teaching practicum class. She showed empathy with her students, since the students' answers did not match the marking scheme. She also blamed her lack of experience in teaching for the problem. This entry gives a sense of the student's strong feeling of responsibility to her TP students.

> Probably in the exam day they were not in mood? Or it was unknown vocabulary? Or the question was not clear and what make them confused? There are many reasons to make them lose the mark? ………..
> I felt very sorry to them. May be I am not good enough in teaching that why make them confused. If one day I were the real teachers I hope I can be helpful teachers. (P4-J8)

The responses she got from her classmates were *empathizing, encouraging, agreeing, adding information* and *exploring* comments.

> Nobody is perfect. Everybody learn from their experience. We can learn from our experience, mistakes, etc. The responsibility of the teacher is helping students how to learn things, languages, how to learn from experience. Am I right? (P9 comment on P4-J8)

> I remember what [one teacher] said in one class that is "Score is meaningless." Actually, as I am a student, I feel the words are difficult to accept. But it is true, when i became a teacher, i feel little by little that the words are ture, really true!! (P6 comment P4-J8)

> Yes, I do agree with [P9]. [P4], we are now students, and we are learning to be a teacher, so no one is perfect. however, I do believe you got some useful experience from this marking practice. Don't be in panic. We all need time and knowledge to be experienced. (P8 comment on P4-J8)

One of her classmates gave suggestions about the problem she had faced.

> my friends,
> i am really proud of you… you give great encouragement to eachother. infact just to add a point above, to reduce confussion it is better to consider all the obsticles that creates this problem in student's minds. giving clear directions in exams is one of them as we learned this fact from [one teacher]. (P1 comment on P4-J8)

According to the above extracts, it can be assumed that the participant has some characteristics of the autonomous learner. She had low self-confidence in her own learning because of her background experience in learning and lack of experience in teaching. However, she had a willingness to take responsibility for her

own learning. This situation allowed her to more easily express the problems and difficulties of her learning and teaching process. The responses she received could help her to understand herself more from the point of view of others, to know possible ways to solve her problems and difficulties, and to gain a deeper personal relationship with her classmates.

In her answer to the email interview, P4 writes that she had no previous journal or blog writing experience, and that she sometimes likes online journal writing. She believes that it makes her a more creative writer by writing free topic journals, and thus it helps her to become an autonomous learner. She likes to give and receive comments from her classmates, and this makes her enjoy journal writing. Nevertheless, she states that she does not want to continue the online journal after the class is finished. She does not mention any reason for her unwillingness to continue.

From the journal extracts and the answers of P4, it can be said that she is dedicated to her language learning and professional development. Although she does not have strong confidence in her ability in language learning and teaching, she has a willingness to take control of teaching and learning tasks. She is also a motivated person in her teaching and learning. Her collaborative interaction with the readers can be seen in the comments of her journal. Her perspective on the experience of online journal writing is positive except that she does not have the desire to continue writing online journal, but she did not give any reason for that perspective. Most of the answers about her perspective on journal writing experience are related to learner autonomy.

4.2.3 Participant 8, Group 1

The participant is female and 29 years of age. She is Chinese, and she has had previous teaching experience before coming to study in the ELT program. The following table is the record of her online journal entries.

Table 4.4 Summary of participant 8's journal entries

No.	Date	Title	Length	Comments Received
1	19/1/09	My thoughts on outliners and brainstormers	646	5
2	24/1/09	A little Sparkle in My mind	592	8
3	31/01/09	Gossip Girls, are you?	446	5
4	08/02/09	right or wrong?	344	3
5	15/02/09	normal or special?	547	3
6	21/02/09	I need fresh air	245	5
7	02/03/09	Writing with blindness	332	3
8	08/03/09	IF…	213	5
9	15/03/09	Thesis v.s. Pregnancy!	430	3
10	22/03/09	The moments in life!	206	4

Participant 8 posted her journals once a week, and there are altogether 10 journals in the 12-week course. Therefore, she took full responsibility for the journal writing task. Most of her writings are about her beliefs and attitudes towards her daily experiences and learning process. Some of her writings are creative, containing poetic and metaphoric expressions. This shows that she critically reflects on her experiences and that she is competent in the use of language. The length of the journals ranges between 206 and 646. She received a certain number of comments from her teacher and classmates. It seems that her journals are interesting to her teacher and classmates. Two of her journal entries, second and fourth, were chosen to bring out her autonomy in learning.

In journal entry 2, she wrote about her thoughts on the task of doing assignments, especially writing assignments. First, she showed her frustration and fatigue in writing a journal as an assignment.

> Hi, everybody, what are you doing now? I guess you must enjoy your weekend at some place with somebody. I hope you all release now without thinking about any assignments or whatever about ELT which sometimes really bothers us and drives us crazy! …
>
> Since the first trimester, almost all the teachers here "push" us to hand in one journal per week. If unfortunately, we may hand in two journals for two subjects. At the beginning, this job was really an annoying routine. …. (P8-J2)
>
> The teachers intentionally try to create chances for use of L2, but conversely the students inevitably put it into a certain restraint. That is to say, what ever the teachers give will become a pressure for students. Once it becomes a kind of pressure, the students will become a slave to "assignment" from teachers or more created by the fear from students themselves. … (P8-J2)

However, then she turned her thoughts to the positive. She revealed advantages she saw in assignments and benefits she got specifically from writing assignments. Finally, she invited her classmates to share their opinions.

> Since this conflict impossibly has "gone with the wind", we then turn back to check its potential advantages. Pressure pushes us and frustrates us, and meantime stimulates our seen or unseen energy in the body. This is what we can see from our pile of journal-assignment. We not only finish the job the teachers give, but also make progress in L2 learning. Nobody denies, right? For me, I see clearly what I gain from "doing so much assignments", and I also see you my dear friends what you gain. Whatever gained may be either a small step or a big stride, at least we are on the journey to our own destination. No matter we are walking or running, just keep motivated by whatever good for us.
>
> My friends: remember to sit down for a while and jot down whatever meaningful to you. Just make one of your thoughtful sparkles in mind into words and share with us!!! By the way, tomorrow (25th of Jan.) is traditional Chinese New Year. Cheers~~~~~~ (P8-J2)

She got 8 responses from her classmates and teacher, which shows that her journal stimulated the minds of others. The comments evaluated her writing positively, agreed with her and shared their own experiences.

> Hi, [P8], I really like this journal. As a human being, thoughtful sparkles always come from our mind. I have to say that you are a good writer. Your

English is really good as well as your knowledge. I so envy you! (P7 comment on P8-J2)

….. I appreciated those assignment and homework, those writing practice pushed me and prompted me keep writing. And I also appreciated my friends they always encourage me, push me and give me motivation, I have learnt so many knowledge from them. (P2 comment on P8-J2)

I like your piece too. It's honest, but it also has that "sparkle!" You're not afraid to say that you get frustrated and tired of it all, but you also know how to bring out the positive in what you are doing. (T comment on P8-J1)

One participant shared what she had noticed about the benefits of journal writing as an assignment for her students' exam papers, and also about her own improvement through journal writing.

The other day, when I handed in the mid term papers to my TP students, i was so happy to tell them the results and how all of them did very well. the results of their exam papers were there because of their weekly journal experiences…
.. the other day, i looked through some of my old journals. i kept correcting myself while i was reading. however, i also realized something, while i began to write better and better each day, i kind of lost the spirit in my oral skills. therefore, these two skills need to be practiced constatly in order to keep them both alive at same levels. what do you think? (P1 comment on P8-J2)

In her Journal Entry 4, P8 reflected upon her cognitive process on the concept of right and wrong from her childhood until now. Finally, she stated the hypothesis that 'nothing is absolutely right or wrong'.

Who can tell us right from wrong? Since the day when I was born, I have been trying to distinguish right from wrong, good from bad. Fortunately, when I was a kid, my parents can help me. They told me what I wanted to know from their life experience. Year by year, I grow up, the more I want to know, the more I get confused. I turn to my parents, but it doesn't work now. I know it is time for me to discover and create my own life. I have my new friends, and less chance to talk to my parents. I begin to get ideas from my friends and discuss with them about their criteria for judging things and people. …..
Perhaps, in this world, nothing is absolutely right or wrong, except those things about natural science. What we can do is to make things reasonable. If something is reasonable, maybe others will think we are right, otherwise, never ever stand in the "right" circle. I like this sentence "if right, just show me the evidence!" Here the word "right" actually equals to reasonable. (P8-J4)

Her classmates agreed on her opinion about right and wrong and added information to

it. They also shared their knowledge and experiences about the conflict of right and

wrong. With relevance to the writer's attitude, one participant commented that it is difficult to change other people's attitudes, and thus it is better to change one's own.

> time is a medicine for all problems. i am sure since you sleep on your thoughts,today you can define what you really want and how much you can comprimise and still be happy. (P1 comment on P8-J4)

> Different people have different opinions, I think. every person has different experences and background. All of us can understand we can not change other's opinions. However, we are human beings, but sometimes we like and want to change other's attitude. Especially, I like to say "I am right, please follow me" in my family. Thus, there are a lot of arguments in my family. Sometime I worry about it. But I hope I can change my attitude one day. (P7 comment on P8-J4)

In answering the questionnaire, the participant stated that she had previous journal writing experience. She described her fondness for journal writing, especially when she can write what she wants. She wrote that she prefers communicating with others in an online journal to communicating only with the teacher. She explained that she has her own blog, and she likes online journal writing. The benefits she has gotten are developing the writing habit, sharing knowledge with the teacher and her classmates and communicating with more than one reader. She thinks that it helps her to become an autonomous learner to some extent because she has written actively every week and expects comments from the others. She likes to comment on others' journals because she wants to share feelings with her classmates. She feels that deeper personal relationships and professional development have happened in the online journals because she and her classmates can understand the each others' thoughts and feelings and get to know each others' writing styles. She concludes that she continues writing online in her own blog whenever she has something to share.

The participant's awareness of the learning task and of her own cognitive process can be clearly seen in her journal. She thinks critically and writes creatively. It can therefore be supposed that she has confidence in her ability as a learner and a willingness to take charge of learning and teaching tasks. Her collaborative

interaction with the readers can be seen in the comments of her journal. She also has a positive perspective on the task of online journal writing and, therefore, she seems to perceive that there is a relationship between learner autonomy and the online journal writing experience.

4.2.4 Participant 17, Group 2

The participant is female and 29 years of age. She is Finnish and she has 2 years of previous teaching experience as a primary school teacher. The following table is the record of her online journal entries.

Table 4.5   Summary of participant 17's journal entries

No.	Date	Title	Length	Comments Received
1	09/10/08	Journal 1	336	4
2	13/10/08	Chi-chi-chi-china	369	9
3	17/10/08	China 2	375	5
4	2910/08	Journal number whatever	261	2
5	05/11/08	Finally	330	0
6	10/11/08	Dolphin's diary	435	3
7	14/11/08	Blonde's diary	395	3
8	23/11/08	Sunday journal	235	3
9	02/12/08	Hellou	268	1
10	09/12/08	Heips!	354	1

Participant 17 did not regularly post journals, but she wrote 10 journals altogether to carry out the journal writing assignment. Her journal topics are mostly about her weekly life experiences, for example, in "Dolphin's diary" , "Blonde's diary" and "Sunday journal". Her awareness of her own and others' culture can also be found in some journal entries such as "Chi-chi-chi-na" and "China 2". The length of the entries ranges between 235 and 435 words. She received many responses to some posts and only a few to others from her teacher and classmates. It seems that some of her journal topics were especially interesting to her teacher and classmates and that

she merely maintains communication with others. Of her 10 journal entries, the fourth and sixth have been chosen for analysis.

In her fourth journal entry, the participant explained why she was posting the journal late. She wrote that it had taken her the whole day to extend her visa. She was writing the entry in the early morning, and she described her plans for the whole day. Then she reflected on the activity that had taken place in the last class. She commented on the benefit she got from the teacher's correction of their grammar errors:

> Ok, about last week class…I agree with everyone that [teacher] raised a good examples of errors from our writings, avoiding common mistakes we can get our writing so much better…. especially for me those where more than important…grammar is not the best part of my writing!!!! 😊 (P17-J4)

She, then, reflected on another activity in the class, peer teaching using the genre approach. She gave a positive evaluation of her classmates' performance.

> The presentation of instructions were interesting that was the first presentation that I saw and now I know what I suppose to do with [P11]. [P15]'s powerpoint was amazing (i do not know, how you do those) and [P17]'s clear instructions for the game, made the topic alive and do not forgetting [P22]'s very calm way to present… so good work!!! 😊And I'm really looking forward to next presentation, narratives… (P17-J4)

One of her classmates responded to what she had said about grammar and also shared her own learning experience.

> Yes, grammar is obviously not the best part of your writing but we still enjoy reading it. That means, grammar is again asserted not to be the most important thing in writing. I made this mistake when I teach over-emphasising Grammar in writing. Now I know it's because I was taught that way. (P16 comment on P17-J4)

In her sixth journal entry, the participant acknowledged the comments she had received from her classmates for the presentation she had done in the class. She accepted the suggestion of her classmates:

> And thanx for you technical term tip, that we should give some word list of dictionary what to use…next time 😊 (P17-J6)

Then, she reflected on the other classroom activities. She analyzed and evaluated the teacher's correction to their writings and the pair work in the peer-review activity.

> …it is very nice that [teacher] shows us every class those common mistakes that we do, because by repeating or concentrating those mistakes makes us maybe someday to actually remember and learn new/correct ways to write. …. I like the idea of [teacher] that last week we had to work with pairs for checking/reading other ones research paper. What I liked most is that [teacher] choose the pairs, because it actually make us to work with persons that we usually do not, which is good. (P17-J6)

She concluded her journal entry with her thought about the Christmas season, Christmas songs and Santa Claus.

> Someone of you mentioned Christmas….was it you [P23]??? It is not too early to listen christmas songs and by the way, you have to give me those christmas songs so that I can listen those as well….I'm waiting for Santa Claus, by the way have you already written to him and told what you want for christmas present, if not, you better start writing. It will give time for Santa Claus to make your wish true…. (P17-J6)

Her classmates responded to her with their positive evaluation and praise for her presentation. They also wrote about outside class social activities.

> You really achieved what you intended to give in your presentation. Congratulation! (P12 comment on P17-J6)

> This week, you reminded me the time when we spent together swimming at Pattaya.Hun Hun! because of you, I knew how to swim. Thanks alot for that. Moreover, thanks for your excellent presentation. (P23 comment on P17-J6)

From the extracts of her journal entries, it can be seen that the participant could deeply reflect on the tasks she was doing in the class. She paid attention to the benefits she got from doing the tasks, from the instruction of her teacher and from interaction with her classmates. She wrote freely in her journal as if she was speaking directly with her friends. The responses she received could give her more confidence in her ability.

In the questionnaire, P17 responded that she had experience in journal writing from her high school, and that she thought journal writing was good. However, she

did not think that she got any benefit from online journal writing nor did it help her to become an autonomous learner. This is because she thought that everyone just said nice things to each other, and were afraid of making errors, and that no deep reflections were shared. Therefore, she did not think that it helped her to a deeper personal relationship or to professional development. She wrote that she did not want to continue with this kind of journal because although it worked in theory, it did not work in practice. It is perhaps because she may want people to communicate more directly and critically, not expressing only positive thoughts to others. She may not have the same way of valuing politeness, and thus finds the mode of expression in the journals shallow.

Although autonomous behaviour and enjoyment in writing the journal could be seen from her entries, her perspective on online journal is on the negative side. It seems that she does not see the relationship between learner autonomy and her experience of online journal writing, since she has a different perception from others on both learner autonomy and communication in journals.

4.2.5 Participant 23, Group 2

The participant is female and 26 years of age. She is Myanmar and has previous teaching experience at ABAC, St. Mark's and Stamford. The following table is the record of her online journal entries.

Table 4.6   Summary of participant 23's journal entries

No.	Date	Title	Length	Comments Received
1	09/10/08	Hi, everyone!	396	7
2	14/10/08	Halo! Week 2 from [P23]	413	2
3	16/10/08	[P23], week 3	212	2
4	20/10/08	[P23], week 4	482	5
5	24/10/08	Week 5, [P23]	664	6
6	31/10/08	Week 6, [P23]	529	1
7	09/11/08	[P23], week-7	489	7
8	16/11/08	Week 8, [P23]	410	5
9	23/11/08	Week 9, [P23]	345	3
10	02/12/08	[P23], week….?	258	0
11	08/12/08	[P23], the last one or may be not….	234	1

Participant 23 regularly posted journals, sometimes twice a week. Altogether she posted 11 journals in the 12-week course, and therefore took full responsibility for her own learning. Her journal topics are mostly about her teaching and learning experiences in the class. It can be said that she is enthusiastic about the language teaching profession. The length of the journals ranges between 212 and 664. She received a number of responses to some posts from her teacher and classmates. and thus it can be said that they collaborated on her topics. Of the 11 journals posted, journal entries 1 and 7 have been chosen for analysis.

Journal 1 started with her greetings to the teacher and her classmates. She showed her interest in journal writing and stated the reasons why she liked to do it. She expressed her enjoyment in receiving comments from the teacher and her classmates. Then she described how she gave feedback to her students in the teaching practicum, applying the feedback strategies that her teacher had used with her. She

also invited her classmates to share ideas, since she had decided to do research on giving feedback.

> It is the very first time that I have ever tried online journal . I found it very interesting. As some of you guys know, I am a really big fan of writing and reading journals and ofcourse, the comments from ajarn,too. Having a chance to write Journal is the great thing for me from taking MA.ELT…
> Luckily , I had a chance to try this on my TP class. …….
> The very first week, everyone wrote nonsense things, the same happened in second weeks.But I still tried to read every journals and react some parts and even express my thoughts like what [teacher] did in my journals. (P23-J1)

The responses P23 got from her classmates represent a positive evaluation on her teaching, exploration of her topic and support for her ideas. Her application of her experience as a student in the situation as a teacher impressed her classmates and teacher.

> Oh, so impressive [P23] (P11 comment on P23-J1)

> Ha ha, it big enough to look clearly! (P14 comment on P23-J1)

> Yeah, it catches my eyes. (P9 comment on P23-J1)

> Nice experience from [P23]. Yes, I share with you the feeling of writing receiving comments on our sts' journals. A very effective way of having personal conversations with them. Although, I have to admit that sometimes I get … fed up with reading more than 40 journals per week. (P16 comment on P23-J1)

> Well, thanks for your tribute on my feedback on journals, [P23]! We talked about it in class and it's nice to know as a teacher teaching teachers, you can pass something on that your students also pass on. (T comment on P23-J1)

In her Journal 7, P23 reflected on the experience of the previous class they had had. She evaluated her classmates' performance of peer-teaching. Her evaluations were positive and she stated that she had learnt from her classmates. She then admitted that she had made a lot of mistakes in her research paper and that she appreciated the feedback of the teacher. After that, she reflected on the experience of the peer-reviewing task and stated that she had enjoyed it and learnt from her peer.

Well, I am sure all of you enjoyed last Thursday class as me. We had great fun, right? Thanks to the "Information report" group. And [P11], I always admire your ways of presenting since I came here. It was a great job. And [P17], yah, you did well too. We did learn a lot ,guys, from your presentation......

Well, he he, it is quite embarrassing to say but I did learn a lot from [teacher]'s slides because I did most of the mistakes from that slides. I am the one who is able to point out others' mistakes but blind on my own paper. ...

And it was such a great idea to get peer review on our first draft before we submit it. I worked with [P21] last week and she is good. She gave me some useful suggestion on my paper which I should check again. ... (P23-J7)

The responses she got from her classmates were *agreeing* with her evaluation of the class activities and *exploring* what she described in her journal entry.

Yes, [P23] we had great fun in [P17] and [P23]'s presentation. It's wonderful! (P12 comment on P23-J7)

Can I have some of the Christmas songs you are listening. I wanna try something new hehe. Hey, you should record a CD of your own. Why not hah? Or have you done that? (P16 comment on P23-J7)

According to the above extracts, it can be said that the participant has characteristics of an autonomous learner. She likes to express her thoughts about her learning process, communicate with her classmates and evaluate the classroom activities, the performance of her classmates and her own ability. She has self-confidence in her learning and communication with others and a willingness to take responsibility for her own learning.

In her response to the email interview, she expresses her fondness for journal writing, especially online journal writing. She believes that journal writing is very important to being an effective teacher and she says—as in the journal--that she is practicing journal writing in the class she is now teaching. She explains that she can let her feelings out, be in touch with her friends and share ideas/reflections with them through the online journal. She thinks that online journal helps her more in her professional development than in her personal relationships with her friends. And she would like to continue the use of online journal writing in future.

Based on her journal extracts and her answers, P23 deeply reflects about her teaching and learning experiences. It can be supposed that she has confidence in her ability and willingness to take control of teaching and learning tasks. She is also a motivated person in her teaching and learning. Her collaborative interaction with the readers can be seen in the comments of her journal. Her perspective on the experience of online journal writing is positive and, therefore, she seems to perceive that there is a relationship between learner autonomy and the online journal writing experience.

Among the five participants analyzed above, three of them are from Eastern countries such as China, Myanmar and Vietnam, one is from a Western country, Finland, and one is from a country between East and West, Turkey. Thus, they differ based on their previous learning experience, their proficiency level in English and their attitudes to the task. Furthermore, as mature and highly-developed personalities, they all express their autonomy in different forms. It can be summarized, nevertheless, that no matter how they differ in culture, background knowledge, previous learning experience and attitudes to the task, they all do exhibit strong characteristics of learner autonomy when they are exposed to the autonomous learning experience in the context of collaborative journal writing online.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has revealed the autonomous characteristics of participants in their journals, their perceptions towards their experience of online journal writing and the particular concerns of 5 individual participants as presented in their journal entries. From the discussion of the content of the journals as a whole, the autonomous characteristics can be seen from three dimensions of learner autonomy, the *metacognitive*, *affective* and *social* dimensions. According to their responses to

interview questions, almost all of the participants relate their experience of online journaling to learner autonomy. The analysis of sample entries of the 5 individual participants shows that they all have ways of expressing autonomy in learning, although these are different in form according to the unique characteristics of the individuals. The main findings of the data analysis are discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

5.1   Introduction

This chapter concludes the present study. It begins with a summary of the main findings. Then the limitations of the study are described. The chapter ends with recommendations for further studies.

5.2   Summary of main findings

Learner autonomy and, in particular, autonomous language learning, is significant for helping language learners to master the target language they are trying to learn (Benson 2001; Holec, 1981; Wenden 1991). This is because autonomy is a pre-condition for effective learning, and autonomous learners not only become better language learners, but also more responsible and critical members of the communities in which they live (Benson 2001). The teacher's active role is an important factor in fostering learner autonomy in the students. This does not imply something the teacher does for or with the learners, and it is not a different teaching method. Rather, the teacher's role is to create and facilitate situations for the students to learn in an environment in which learners take control of their own learning, which is what has been referred to as an autonomous learning environment (Benson 2001). However, in order to foster autonomous learning in their students, teachers should have experienced an autonomous learning environment themselves. It is a well-confirmed truth that one can best teach what one has experienced oneself. Research has also indicated that autonomous learning in language teacher education influences the teacher's ability to foster learner autonomy in their students (Breen and Mann 1997, Little 1991, Dam 2007). The present study, therefore, investigated autonomous behaviours of student teachers in the learning environment of a language teacher

education program. In order to observe the autonomous learning of student teachers, online journals and email interviews were used for collecting data. In this concluding chapter, the researcher summarizes and interprets the various issues raised in previous chapters in order to answer the research questions, and discusses the contributions to the research that her study has made.

5.2.1 What autonomous characteristics can be found in the online journals of graduate student teachers in the MA-ELT program at Assumption University, Thailand?

In order to reveal the autonomous characteristics of the student teachers, online journals posted by the participants were analyzed from the *metacognitive , affective* and *social* dimension.

In the *metacognitive dimension*, metacognitive knowledge of the participants was observed. Metacognitive knowledge is seen in their reflections on their learning experiences as expressed in the online journal. This knowledge consists of three subcategories: *person knowledge, strategic* knowledge and task knowledge. Concerning *person* knowledge, the participants show their knowledge or awareness of the relevance of personal factors, such as age, nationality, cultural background, cognitive styles, learning styles, problems, difficulties and previous learning experience. They relate this knowledge to its effect on their learning process. They critically reflect on the positive and negative effects of personal factors on their learning. In relation to *strategic* knowledge, they express their knowledge of good strategies related to language learning and teaching generally and the strategies that work best for them personally. Regarding *task* knowledge, the participants show their knowledge of learning and teaching related tasks. They express their awareness of the purpose and benefit of the tasks they did in the class, the difficulty of the assignments,

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and the resources needed to accomplish the task. Moreover, their knowledge of the role of teachers, the role of various teaching approaches and the goals of education were discussed in their journals.

In the *affective dimension*, the participants' attitudes towards learner autonomy were observed. The two main attitudes examined were the willingness of the participants to take responsibility for their learning, and their confidence in their ability to do so. The result shows that the participants expressed their willingness to take responsibility for their own learning process through the fact that they could express their intrinsic motivations and the emotions that carrying out their learning tasks aroused. Their willingness to take responsibility also extended to their sense of responsibility to future students and to the education system of their country. However, a few participants showed reluctance to pursue their own learning process when they were faced with difficult situations. These participants showed low confidence in their ability to be successful in the learning and teaching process. At the same time, they expressed hope that if they practiced their language skills more, they would have confidence after finishing the course. On the other hand, some participants explicitly showed their strong confidence in their ability to use their skills successfully as teachers.

In the *social dimension*, construction of new knowledge through social interaction was the focus of the analysis. Each participant in turn took the role of initiator to introduce topics as they posted their weekly online journal entries. The social interaction of the participants can be seen in their cultural awareness, on the one hand, and in collaborative actions they carry out though the journal, on the other. The journals contained expressions of their awareness of culture and how they see their own culture and the cultures of their classmates. It was not possible to find

significant differences in the participants in terms of their willingness to exercise their autonomy, whatever their culture might be. This may be a result of the intercultural awareness strongly promoted in their program of study.

In addition, new knowledge was constructed on their existing knowledge through collaborative interactions in the comments they made on each others' journals. Their attitudes towards learner autonomy, whether positive or negative, were also negotiated. The teacher and other classmates justified this knowledge by *empathizing, encouraging, asking for clarification, evaluating, exploring, suggesting, supporting* and *adding information* as they responded to postings. Therefore new knowledge was built by such collaborative responses at the same time as interdependence was nurtured.

These are the characteristics of learner autonomy found in the journals of the student teachers of an MA-ELT program. The following section shows how this result is related to their perceptions about online journaling.

5.2.2 What are the perceptions of these graduate student teachers about the online journal writing experience in relation to learner autonomy?

The email interviews with the participants show the relationship between their experience of online journal writing and their perception of learner autonomy.

Most of the participants like online journal writing and think that they get benefits from posting journal entries and receiving and giving comments from their classmates; thus journaling helps create deeper personal relationships with their classmates. Some of them believe that it also leads to professional development.

More than half of the participants declared that they want to continue the practice of online journal writing beyond the end of the course. Some of the participants even spontaneously suggested that they want to use this kind of online

journal writing in the classes they are now teaching and to find other ways to create similar environments for their students.

Although there are many positive characteristics of learner autonomy in their journals, there are a few negative perceptions on their experience of online journal writing, especially in their attitudes on personal relationship with others and professional development. A few of the participants express the opinion that there was no depth to the discussion and that people said only nice things to each other since they were afraid of what others would think about them. Thus, there may have been some people who did not feel free to write what they wanted to. However, in many of the extracts of journals, it is found that most people are not afraid to express themselves, whether they are making positive or negative points; they also cautiously point out the good points and weak points of others. It can be concluded that the participants have their own ways of expressing autonomy in learning and their individual perceptions, since autonomy is a 'multidimensional construct' and the participants in the course differ in age, nationality, cultural background and experience in learning and teaching.

Based on the findings of this study, the environment in which the student teachers are involved in online journal writing is an autonomous learning environment. The participants were found to possess characteristics of autonomous learners in spite of their individual learner differences. Although it cannot be firmly predicted that these autonomous learners will become autonomous teachers, they are at least more likely to create an autonomous environment for their students, since they have experienced autonomous learning themselves.

Finally, the results of this study seem to show quite strongly that a journaling environment in which the whole class can participate has many benefits in terms of

the challenge for the students to think critically, express themselves individually and work together to make meaning. For a similar journaling context to be successful for lower-level learners, however, adjustments would have to be made in order to scaffold and motivate the students to express their thoughts and to guide them as to positive ways of social interaction. In other words, the teacher would have to be a more active player in the journaling process. These pedagogical implications would have to be weighed carefully in terms of the course goals as a whole.

5.3   Limitations of the study

In spite of the many positive findings, there are some limitations to the study, which are discussed below.

1)   As is the case with much qualitative classroom research, the positive results in terms of the participants' autonomous behaviors cannot be generalized to other situations. This is also the case because of the small sample size, the relatively high proficiency level of the learners and the specific goals of the course in which they participated.

2)   Learner autonomy is dynamic in nature and is a muldimensional construct. From the evidence given in this study, it cannot be asserted that these participants show this kind of autonomous behaviour all the time.   In addition, although they are described as autonomous learners in this context, it cannot be definitely said that they are autonomous in other contexts.

3)   Even though the students were not influenced by a research effect in writing their journals, there may have been a positive effect from the classroom context in which it was carried out. That is, having been assigned the task of writing online journals as one component of the class,

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the students might have paid special attention to it and thus seen it in a more positive light than they might otherwise have done.

4) The common claim in researching diary data is that they are content-rich in nature and need much time and effort to analyze. Although the researcher wanted to deeply analyze the journal entries of each participant, it was not possible to do so because of the limitation of time and words in writing up this research for the MA thesis.

5) Another limitation of the study is the contribution of the participants in answering email interviews about their perspectives on online journal writing. Some of the participants finished their MA program and went back to their home countries during the time the research was carried out. Fortunately, almost all of the participants did contribute to the e-mail interview in the end. The results, however, might be more accurate if there had been full participation.

6) Finally, in the questionnaire question concerning the benefit of writing the journal in terms of deepening personal and professional relationships, the terms 'personal' and 'professional' appeared in one question, confusing some of the interviewees and leading to fewer responses than would otherwise have been expected. Thus, less perceptual data was gathered in this area than otherwise might have been.

5.4   Recommendations for further study

Based on the findings of the present study, the following are recommendations for further research:

Firstly, the present study examines the relationship between journal writing and the autonomous behaviour of student teachers of an ELT program in one Thai

university context in which the participants were highly motivated learners; the results are limited to this investigatory context. In order to strengthen the evidence, it is recommended that this type of study be replicated in other learning contexts and at different levels, especially undergraduate level learners who are acquainted with technology and the Internet.

Secondly, the findings show that most of the participants like to share their journals and interact with each other, and that this helps them reach deeper personal relationships and professional development. This result may be influenced by culture or by a specific learning environment or system. It is therefore recommended to try this kind of online journal writing exchange with students from different universities within one country or from universities in different countries to see whether the results would be the same.

Thirdly, the journal format used in the present research was open-ended and free-topic, and thus students wrote what they felt like writing. It was sometimes observed that they wrote nothing related to academic content. Further research is recommended to use this kind of journal format with a focused topic related to the course content.

Fourthly, the findings showed that the student teachers in this study possessed autonomous behaviours while they were in an autonomous learning environment. They were motivated by this aspect of the course to create an autonomous learning environment for their future students and to foster learner autonomy in their students. It would be valuable to observe these participants in their professional work after they finish their MA-ELT course to see to what extent and in what ways they extend autonomous learning principles to their students.

Lastly, journal entries are posted online and thus can be seen by a wider audience. It is to be expected that the level of reflectivity and expression of personal factors may be different with private journals and in student-teacher dialogue journals. It would be worthwhile to compare the content of online journals with traditional student-teacher dialogue journals.

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Appendix - 1

Examples of Journal Group 1

Welcome to the Writing Online Journal

This journal is to give you a chance to write informally and express your feelings and opinions about what you are doing in the writing class, or even in the GSE program more broadly. For the first week, you can write how you feel about the class so far, or about your research topic/paper, or perhaps comment on the article you are reading for this week on "brainstormers" and "outliners". Maybe you identify with one of those and would like to tell which you think you are and why.

You can also comment about an issue of personal concern to you that you want to share with others, even if it's not directly related to the theme of the course.

As with many or most journals, I'll respond, but, in general, I won't correct–Unless there's something I think is important and I just can't resist! Therefore, feel free to write at will…Enjoy your online journal!

To write a message like this one, click on "post", write message, click on the category "Journal Week …", then "publish" to make it appear on the main screen so others can read it. Anyone wanting to comment can click on "comments" above the message, and/or write a message in the field marked "leave a reply" below the post on the main screen. Let me know your problems!

(For example, right now, the server won't post my message, but at least it saved it in "drafts"! Now I'm going to click "save draft" to make sure what I wrote doesn't get deleted. I'll try again later to "publish" it.)

All for now, [Teacher]

January 17 2009 01:25 pm | Journal Week 2 (January 17 - 23, 2009)

2 Responses to "Welcome to the Writing Online Journal"

1. *[P8]* Says:
   January 19th, 2009 at 3:02 pm

   Thank you, Doc.[Teacher]!
   Now, i will try my first experience about writing online!

2. *[Teacher]* Says:
   January 20th, 2009 at 11:30 am

   Thanks for your response to my first posting, also for your comments in the email you wrote me. It is good to know that somebody has used this opportunity! You've written a very thoughtful blog above, which I want to

respond to now. I hope others will do so too, both respond to your comments and write their own posting!

My thoughts on Outliners and brainstormers

I just finish reading the article for this week. As [Teacher] said, it is really interesting, at least I think so. In the article, the author presented a conversation with her husband, which in fact is very common when we talk about our writing style. In my opinion, the author tries to say no matter the writer is an outliner or a brainstormer, it doesn't matter because it is often flexible and complex in individual writing strategies, especially in the process of generating ideas and arranging material. By the way, many other factors can affect the writing style of writers, such as constraints of task, audience, available of material.

Since we are all human beings, we are different in many ways, what we express no matter via speaking or writing, the process should or must be various. With the idea of this article, I am thinking about myself. Am I a type of outliner or a brainstormer? To what extent I can attribute myself to a certain type? How do I perform in the whole writing process? Do I construct meaning before a formal writing, or discover meaning during a mess of drafts? Looking back my experiences about writing, most time I tried to come up with an outline after I finished a draft of writing, in other words, I like to start writing as soon as I receive a kind of writing task. To be sad, in reality, most writing assignments have time restriction. Most time I find what I write down is not what I really want to write, but I have no time to rewrite and revise. From the viewpoint of theory, I may belong to the type of brainstormer which discovers meaning through several drafts writing.

However, in real world, some writing assignments don't allow us to fulfill this. So it seems that we are forced to become an outliner in writing class. This is what I experienced in my TP classroom. As a teacher trainee, when I taught my students the ways to prepare the writing of the mid-exam, one of them is how to write an outline. Even though the first step before writing an outline is taking notes promptly which seems like brainstorming, my students still felt confused about how to write a format-alike outline. I am not complaining about this method, but I just suppose maybe this kind of way restrains the students' creativity and forces them to be the same writing style. What more serious may happen in traditional writing class in China. In order to get a good score for the writing part in CET national examination, the writing teachers usually teach students using same formats of writing structures, which control students from writing outline to the final draft of writing. This way may help a part of students closer to the better marks, but over time they may become a kind of machine which loses the flexibility.

Once again, I am not trying to criticize the defects of outliners, but I am just thinking that since our approaches to writing are different, how can we balance this into the real writing classroom? No matter we are outliners or brainstormers, we have our ways to reach the destination. Furthermore, Writing is a process much more personal, once we try to put it formulated, where is the true joy and meaning for the writing? How can we make our students enjoy writing? How can we do in writing class if some of students are outliner type, some are brainstormers? Or I, as a teacher, tend to

be a type of brainstormer, would I guide my students unconsciously to preference on brainstormer like me? Many changeable factors influence our final result, what they probably are do you think about besides what the author talks about in the article?

written by [P8]

January 19 2009 04:18 pm | Journal Week 2 (January 17 - 23, 2009)

5 Responses to "My thoughts on Outliners and brainstormers"

1. *[Teacher]* Says:
   January 20th, 2009 at 11:57 am

   [P8], you have written a very thoughtful posting on the reading for this week and what it means to you–It's by way of being an essay in its own right! I think I'd like two respond to two or three of the things you said (which won't do you justice, but I don't want to make my reply TOO long!
   One point you made that's very important, and I think a main point of the article itself, is that different writers have different ways of initiating the act of writing, some start with a structure which they then fill (outliners), some with notes jotted down which become, as you aptly put it "a mess of drafts". One can write the outline once one is finished–I did that too, when an outline was required of me!
   In writing classes or instruction, it's important to leave enough openness to allow student writers to proceed in the way they feel most comfortable. That is, I think, what the process approach wanted to do–Let the writers work it out for themselves.
   But since the proponents of that approach felt, initially at least, that their way, the way of the "brainstormers" was THE way to approach writing, the way that professional writers wrote, they may have pushed their students to be brainstormers, whether it suited them or not, as you suggest too: "Or I, as a teacher, tend to be atype of brainstormer, would I guide my students unconsciously to preference on brainstormer like me?" I know I've been guilty of that (after I discovered the process approach).
   As a brainstormer myself, let me ask a provocative question: Do students want to outline because their minds work that way (as the author believes) or because that's the way they've been trained? (Is outlining a "natural" or only a "taught" behavior?) What do others think?
   That brings me to another main point in your posting, [P8], that often the instruction pushes students to write in a way they don't necessarily feeling comfortable with and that stifles creativity. One restriction is time. And one type of writing that's very subject to time constraints is exam writing (also a very important type, maybe the most important type in China!). Exam writing is, of course, not authentic writing, except in the sense that school is a kind of "workplace", and it's "workplace writing" during the time we spend at school. But it's not writing for the real-world out there! Obviously, you won't have much time to revise an exam essay–you have limited time to write–so the best you can do is plan briefly at the beginning, and an outline is an efficient way to do that. Exam writing is "display" writing: It's showing you can do it, but it's not for any real communication, and nobody really tries to make it "fun"–

If the topic is fun to write about, that's a kind of side-benefit. And if you're too "creative", you may not display your knowledge of the rules of writing that you've been taught sufficiently. All in all, exam writing is probably some of the least appealing there is! You're right, [P8], it is not as satisfying to teach or to do, it tends to make all the writing look the same, — and the outline is a "necessary evil"! (For brainstormers, anyway.)

2. *[Teacher]* Says:
January 20th, 2009 at 12:03 pm

It seems there's a limit on how long a comment can be, and I reached the limit!
I was just going to say, at the end, that everybody will have to decide about the merits or possible disadvantages of the genre approach which we will take in our class. I think it tries to give a structure to writing without destroying the writer's individual expression, and it certainly allows for reader input, revision and other elements of process approach. I'll be interested to hear how you all feel about it and respond to it. — And that's enough from me today. Somebody else now!!! ☺

3. *[P8]* Says:
January 20th, 2009 at 10:22 pm

[Teacher], thank you so much for your comments on my first online journal. I read it enjoyalbly and do appreciate your provocative question: "Do students want to outline because their minds work that way (as the author believes) or because that's the way they've been trained? (Is outlining a "natural" or only a "taught" behavior?)" Actually, this is what i am thinking more after reading the article.And also i discussed with [P2] and asked her what kind of writer she is according to the perspective from the article shows. She said she is likely to perfer constructing an outline before writing, and meantime she argued with me "don't you think writing a mess of drafts could be a waste of time? And can you do this writing in real class?" I tried to persuade her by my side. Now I think in fact nobody is absolutely right or wrong, we are on our own way to reach the destination. In the article, the author uses a word which i may ignore; that is "radical". Once we consider problems in a kind of extreme way, we would make ourselves into trouble. Once again here what we talk or argue actually no definite answer. Once it works for us, everything could be. For outliners or brainstormers, i think they must or perhaps benefit from a certain style of writing, otherwise, they won't exsit by now and stir an arguement of two groups of people-"outliners and brainstormers". Back to the question [Teacher] you posed-Do we really need outline because we think that way? Or just because we are trained that way since we went to sit in writing classroom? In my memory, it seems that the writing teacher uses the tedious and single way all the time: outline first and then writing! That is what we understand and learn in class, and that is why we believe this kind of way is natural and right! To be saddest, most writing tasks are not real writing for real world, and most writing is just for exams. Natually we subconsciously or unconsciously divide writing into two parts: real writing and exam writing (or fake writing). Oh, what i am gonna say here, oops~ I feel dizzy again. Like the

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author in the article, our perspectives are changing as we discover something new, different, or contrary. No matter who we are, just be sure to find the way we really feel comfortable and workable!

4. *[P2]* Says:
   January 21st, 2009 at 1:58 am

   Yep, we dicussed about that. Becasue we trained to use 'outline' from primary school time, which guide us to compose in my first language. Our writing teacher told us,we should take notes and we should follow the outline to complete composition. Especially we trained how to accomplish a good composition when we took exams, there are so many aspects to limit us must make a outline in our mind, such as limited time and topics.

   So in my opinion, there is no absolutely right or wrong, sometimes we depend our feeling to compose, if we have enough time and we have some creative ideas to write a journal or diary, we would choose brainstorming unconsciously. If we took exam in limited time, absolutely we will choose outline as a guider. ^_^

5. *[P6]* Says:
   January 24th, 2009 at 12:21 am

   i am 200%brainstormer!
   i never write well if i follow any outline i wrote before >_<!!

ethics and morals

This week, I would like to write about ethics and morals in general and how the understanding of it works in education system in **my country**. I guess at first, I would have to define the distinction between ethics and morals. Ethics deals with right and wrong as well as with the interactions between people and their society. On the other hand, morals are set of rules passes to us through social and religious experiences that serve to govern our independent actions. If we think of morals, they only apply to individual action and consequence; ethics on the other hand apply to the actions of two or more people. They are useless unless applied in a social context and they serve to define the acceptable actions of the individual within the social structure, it is then only depend on us to behave morally right to be able to fit in those ethically correct behavior.
So, if my behaviors are against the standards of the group I belong to, then, I am considered as ethically wrong by others and probably I would also be considered as a person who lacks morals too. Why is that? Because morals define personal character and one lacks of having those qualities can behave ethically wrong. We follow ethics in our daily life; work ethics, family ethics, social ethics etc. and we are all expected to behave in a right way through all institutions that I mentioned above.
So what happens if we do not behave ethically right? Or what kind of reactions we might get from others? As I said, our qualities, our morals makes us who we are and they are the only qualities keep us in the strait line; ethically expectable line. We often talk about the qualities of teachers with friends and I can't stop thinking about the teachers of **my country** who lack all kind of morals but still, they can be ethically

accepted. Some teachers (in fact most teachers who work in the government schools) except gifts or ask for a particular gift to parents at the end of the semester. Even before they request these gifts, sometimes families ask them whether they would want something particular. Now in between two sentences there is a big controversy. It seems like in the first sentence families are victims, on the other hand in the second sentence it seems like families are willingly accepting of being victims. It sounds like a game doesn't it? A certain patterns of behaviors are taught to families by teachers or by other parents as if they should be doing this as a chain of behavior every single year. So in this case, teacher who lacks morals is perfectly accepted by parents and therefore society and this is why, this behavior is ethically right. Is it really?

Well, let's look at the situation from another perspective; reasons that families and teachers give to themselves in order to justify their behaviors. It is a common fact that teachers get paid a small amount of salary in order to survive in a country where inflation is not stable. I only used the word of survival, because this is what they are doing in the minds of the families. On the other hand, if this is what they think to justify the teacher and their behavior they must do the same thing in order to 'survive' to others. Everyone is feeding from somebody else's back. How interesting! If this is a quite agreement between these people we cannot say teachers lack morals because their requests are perfectly accepted by their surroundings.

As an individual, we can only set examples to others in these situations by refusing families. What happens then? Parents talk. 'Mrs. Etc has high morals, this is what a teacher be like' .Then I laugh at them, because they are the ones who are willingly want to be in this ugly game.

I guess, I went too long on this matter, but to summarize my thoughts I can only say, as individuals we set values, morals and as teachers we should have these morals to educate kids well enough. Otherwise we only walk in the same circle and do not step further ahead for a better future.

[P1]

January 20 2009 10:30 pm | Journal Week 2 (January 17 - 23, 2009)

3 Responses to "ethics and morals"

1. *[P8]* Says:
   January 21st, 2009 at 1:23 am

   This is an interesting topic. from my personal judgement, i can say i am a humanbeing who has morals. But from the perspective of ethics, i am a little afraid of saying that i am ethically right always. Before reading the journal of [P1], i have not thought about the distinction between ethics and morals which seems too ordinary to ignore. Everybody has their own ways to judge themslves and others. We can say they are right ehcially or morally, but there is still something different as [P1] talks about in this journal. I have the similar experience to [P1]'s. In China, teachers are considered as a career with a morally higher quality. the society sets some expectations for being a good teacher, which could be explained ethically, because people think being a teacher should be a good example for others, at least for students,however, in reality, the similiar situation like [P1]'s country do exist. Some teachers accept gifts from students or parents, no matter what kind of purposes being put in.

So to some extent, teachers destroy the rules set by society but ridiculously this is acceptable on the other hand.

It seems to show that morals make us not hunt animals, but ethics at another extreme allow us to eat more fresh flesh from pathetic creature. What can we choose to follow, by morals or by ethics?
How much do we perform in life ethically right but morally wrong?

2. *[Teacher]* Says:
January 23rd, 2009 at 3:45 pm

Wow, well this is a minefield! A very complex and very fascinating topic which I cannot hope to do justice to (and still get my prep done for YOUR class tonight! which would be morally and ethically questionable, I guess!) We can see what you write how thinking about, talking about, justifying ethics and morals can become a vicious circle where the more you try to explain it logically, and the more you practice your customs, the more you go around and around, the more you are, in fact, not living either ethically or morally! I just want to make a personal comment: I receive gifts from my students all the time! (Especially the Chinese and Thai ones). I have assumed that I am simply following the customs of the culture from which the students come by accepting them. But [P1], who comes from a culture more like mine, is raising a moral/ethical issue about it! I assume she means gifts of more value than the ones I normally receive, though value is a relative thing too. There has always been in the back of my mind the question whether I was just rationalizing the acceptance of these gifts, and whether they had a different meaning for the giver than I realized—in other words, whether there were expectations of me that were based on them. I have always shoved this thought away, but now I wonder again…
I would be glad for others, including Chinese and Thai students, to comment!:-)
All for now,
[Teacher]

3. *[P1]* Says:
January 24th, 2009 at 12:29 am

Dear [Teacher],
I certanly did not mean small gifts or memorable souvenirs. It seems like they perticulary ask for more valuable products, generally precious jewelery.As for you, I am sure your students would like to give you something that you remember them by. These are extreme ends.
As for tonight class, each day I am learning more, this class is pushing me to read more and more.
CHEERS….
[P1]

My language is a circle

When I sought information which connects with the relationship between reading and writing, I found an article is about the contrastive rhetoric, which discussed about some writing problems in second language. The author describes a Chinese student's feeling when he writes compositions with L1 and L2. When I read this article, I have the same feeling about composing in L2. The Chinese student describes his writing process:

When I write compositions, I come into trouble. There are many good sources I could get from the Chinese culture while I write in Chinese: such as literary quotations, famous old stories, and ancient word of wisdom. These rich sources definitely influence my paper to English. Sometime I try to make a joke, but it loses its impact in translation. Finding the right English word to match what I am thinking in Chinese is very frustrating and often blocks my writing process. To continue my writing, I have to choices generally. One is to give up this sentence and try to express the same meaning in another way. The other alternative is to check a Chinese-English dictionary. However, translation like that usually leaves me with vague meanings and the impact is lost in the tattered pages of my dictionary. Writing like this is very choppy and does not flow.

I think for the most ESL students have the same 'feeling' about composing. Because we have different language and different culture, those elements influence the composing process deeply. Have you think about what the pattern is your language when you are composing, how you organize the composition between L1 and L2. As a teacher who teaches beginning-level ESL students' writing should know about this writing patterns, how they organize the sentences and how they express their feeling in their own culture, in that way, we can find a way to guide them improve English proficiency, also it could help us to improve writing skill. But what is the pattern of organization in L1, when I read this book I found the very interesting dooles whcih is the Kaplan's 'doodles' (1988). the different pattern shows us the differences among different culture and language.
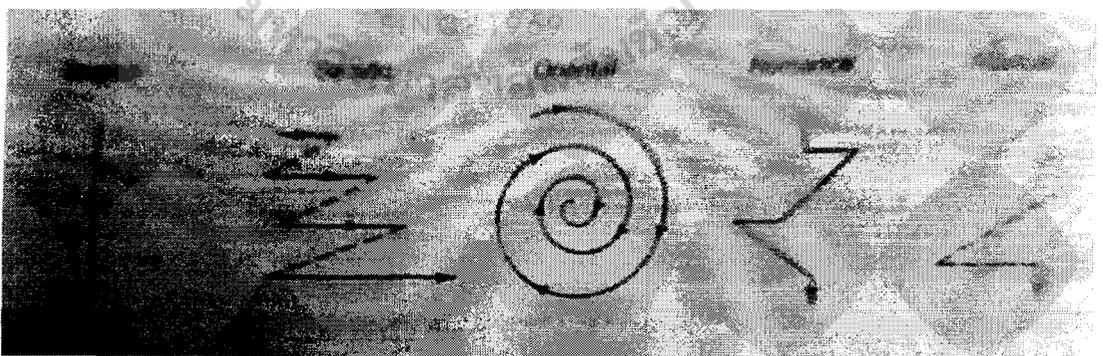
I took the picture from the book, so you can see it very clear (but it is a little blurry, sorry! ^_^"). The first pattern describes the English writing pattern, it's a straight, the main point you can see at the end. However, in my language—Chinese which is a circle, the main point is in the middle of the circle. As a Chinese, I know what the Chinese compositions are. Chinese students seem to avoid free expression of personal views and feelings; they prefer use quotations and references to the past instead. And Chinese writers tend to 'suggest' or be indirect, it impacted by the culture which we can't change, there is saying said 'you can lead a horse to the river, but you can't make it to drink', we know there has different between English and our

first language, but culture thing is fixed in our mind which we can't change it too much. However, in other ways, comparing the difference of composing between L1 to L2, we can realize what kind of blocks influence our writing process and how to improve the writing ability in L2 setting. I hope through this journal, maybe it will give you a little bit new ideas and clues to think about in your language, now tell us what is the shape of your language? ^_^

Written by [P2]

January 21 2009 01:35 am | Journal Week 2 (January 17 - 23, 2009)

3 Responses to "My language is a circle"

1. *[P8]* Says:
   January 21st, 2009 at 2:05 am

   Definitely I do agress with what [P2] you said here. This kind of embarrassing situation from L1 to L2 is what i often encounter in writing in English!
   As a learner of L1, we probably say we are good at expressing what we want to, but as a learner of L2, this will be frustrating. For me, i have such experience as a student. I handed in a kind of writing in L2, which i would think understandable, but it may not make sense for a foreign teacher. Like [P2] talks about here, many facters can affect our writing process and style, such as L1 feature, our own culture,… which shape our writing way to different degree. As Chinese, my shape of language may be a circle like [P2]'s, however, when i do some reading in L2, the language seems to me a circle too, because sometimes i can't find the clues about the authors and i can't understand what they talking about,or worsely the language is not L2 but an alien words for me.
   In my opinion, as learners or teachers in future, we have to consider first "what we are and then discover who they are", ideally we can combine what we learn from "us(L1)" with what learned from "them(L2 or something else)" effectively!

2. *[Teacher]* Says:
   January 23rd, 2009 at 3:32 pm

   Dear [P2] AND [P8],
   Thanks to both of you for commenting on this topic, because Contrastiv Rhetoric is one of my favorite areas of ELT writing! I cannot do it justice today, but I want to just make one comment about Kaplan's doodles, first made in 1966, by the way! and one about [P8]'s response to [P2]'s comments. These doodles have become discredited by other researchers, who called Kaplan racist and other not-nice things, because they said he stereotyped the different cultures and made English look the best, because the simplest and most logical. There has been much research since which avoids doing that, and we have a more sophisticated picture of CR today, but obviously those doodles can still speak to writers of different cultures, like you!
   What [P8] said reflects a more complex view of the problem: That whether we see something as a straight line or not depends on our own view as a reader!

For [P8], English writing may look like the circle attributed to the "oriental", because she cannot read the cultural signs that are in it! And there has been research on "reader-friendly" and "writer-friendly" writing that explores that problem. One article has a title based on the saying that [P2] quoted, something like: "If you can lead a horse to water, you don't have to make it drink!" What would that mean in this context??

This all makes me want to include CR in our writing course, which I used to do but took out: Not every class could identify with the problems. I hope that's what you are writing about [P2] (must read your proposal!!!)

See you later,

[Teacher]

3. *[P6]* Says:
   January 24th, 2009 at 12:18 am

   my dear [P2],
   i am interest in that picture as well as your "circle"theory, how can you get that*@_@*
   you say"Chinese students seem to avoid free expression of personal views and feelings",i agree to a certain degree,as we were taught in that way since we were pupil.but i still insist that it's up to personality.because i prefer free expression of personal views and feelings so much(*^mm^*) ……
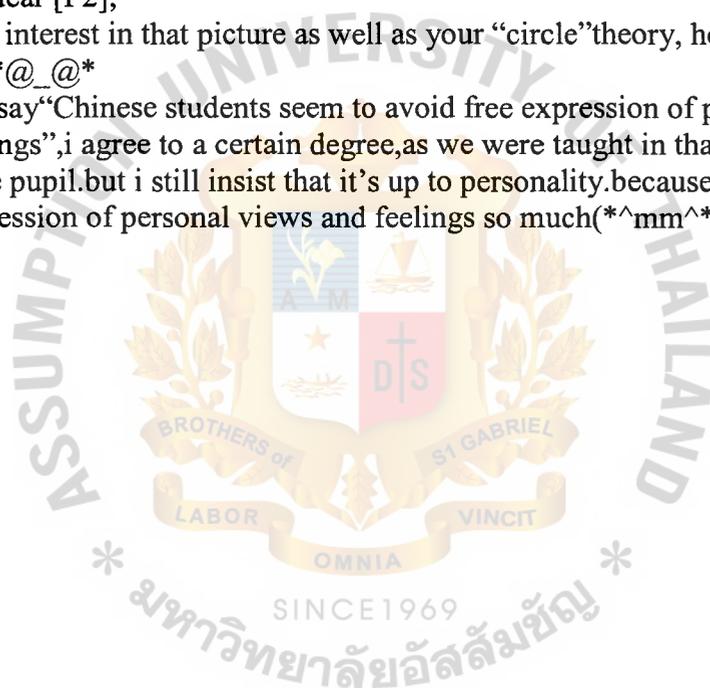
Appendix - 2

Examples of Journal Group 2

Still not sure what's going on!

Dr. Kasia has made this so we can sign in now, but I still wonder if it's working right. I can't see the posts when I'm at the blog homepage. It shouldn't be that way, I don't think.

October 06 2008 03:40 pm | Week 2

Your course blog page

Welcome to this journal page. It is not yet the way I expected it to be, and so far, I don't exactly know how to register you to use it. So stay tuned till I get back to you (by Monday).

The genre site, however, is all set up, so you can go tohttp://www.gse.au.edu/genres and check out my welcome message there.
October 06 2008 03:54 pm | Week 2

5 Responses to "Your course blog page"

1.   *admin* Says:
October 6th, 2008 at 3:55 pm

These comments were originally posted by [P16] in another section:

"hi all! Let's try, I've never used such a thing."
"Ahhh it works, haha!! I haven't done the proposal yet, Shhh!! don't tell anyone."

2.   *admin* Says:
October 6th, 2008 at 3:56 pm

And this was dr [Teacher]'s reply:

"I won't tell if you don't! (Just don't tell the teacher!!! 🙂)
[Teacher]"

3.   *[P16]* Says:
October 7th, 2008 at 1:31 pm

Have I already been signed in? Not quite sure if there's any other procedure.

4.   *[P14]* Says:

<u>October 8th, 2008 at 2:47 am</u>

Luckly, my journal was successfully published. To be interested, all of us could do so much with this blog. Everybody, have fun! Good night, and sweet dream!

5.   *[P12]* Says:

<u>October 8th, 2008 at 3:14 am</u>

So nice, I have logged in and published my 1st journal. Blog writing is very interesting, I love it. I hope all my friends will like it.

Everyone is signed in as an "author"

All the class members are on the blog list, which means you can "write" posts and "comment" on other people's posts. So now I'd love to see everybody write something by Thursday's class. Comment on how you think the course is going, how you're doing with your research paper topic, how you feel about writing and why, or any other relevant topic.

After you've written a post, click on "publish" to send your post to the homepage. To reply to this or any other post, click on "comment" at the top of the post. A reply window will appear.

And please let me know if you have any problems using this site.

Go for it! Express yourself! Write!

[Teacher]

October 07 2008 04:59 pm | <u>Week 2</u>

One Response to "Everyone is signed in as an "author""

1.   *[P14]* Says:

<u>October 8th, 2008 at 2:58 am</u>

Thanks, [Teacher]!
I am now OK to use this blog, and have published my first journal successfully as well as commented on [P12]'s.
Anyway, it is the first time that I touch this sort of writing. So wonderful it is! I love it!
By the way, we will surly benefit from writing course in a distinct way - learn from our friends.
Come on, my dear friend, just do it!

1st journal

Oct 2nd, 2008 [P12]

Today we are talking about curriculum cycle. I am quite interested in the topic. It involves four main stages. The first stage is preparation. Teachers should select what is going to be taught and design relevant activities. I think this work should be done before the class. As what we have done in our writing course, every week we have advanced reading and research for next week. It is a good way for us to prepare for the coming class. Moreover, I also ask my students to prepare for next class in my TP. For example, have students collect some information according to certain topic. They can learn by themselves before the class, and everybody can exchange their idea in the class.

As the second stage——modelling. It is a very important part in writing. I still remember that my English teacher teach us in this way. Teacher introduces a model of the genre to the class and analyzes its feature. What we should do is to memorize some "useful structure and sentence" for certain genre. And the certain genre is related to our examination. It is sad, but it's true. Almost everything we learn aim at passing all kinds of exams. Especially writing, we just learn it mechanically. Therefore, a writing model is what we should memorize in Chinese EFL class.

The third stage, joint construction. Our group has discussed this stage in class. In this stage, students can exchange their idea with each other. Students and teacher can negotiate about text of the certain genre. From the negotiation, students will well understand the certain genre. And then they can work together to construct their writing. In China, we never have this activity. However, in my opinion it is a very useful attempt of learning writing.

The last stage is independent construction of text. After the three stages above, students can construct their writing independently.

The four stages are involved in the writing process, and they really work in writing class. Furthermore, we can see how they work from the practice given by Anne Burns. The article shows us a good example for teaching L2 writing. In short, I benefit quite a lot from this class. Thanks for [Teacher] and all my dear friends. :)

October 08 2008 02:13 am | Week 2

3 Responses to "1st journal"

1.   *[P14]* Says:

October 8th, 2008 at 2:36 am

From what [P12] wrote, especially with examples, I get a review of functional approach in detail and clearly make sense of the curriculum cycle involves four related steps. Moreover, her journal illustrated logically, as well as was filled in personal point of view, so it is at all times looked alive.

2.	*[Teacher]* Says:

<u>October 14th, 2008 at 11:20 pm</u>

Yes, a good journal entry! I think you show the danger of genre approach. The model is not to be "memorized" but analyzed and then adapted to similar tasks (not the same one)! But if students do that mechanically, their writing won't be able to achieve its intended purpose–to communicate a certain kind of information. I think the genre approach should work well in China though, for the reason that students (and teachers) are used to having a framework to work within.

Cheers,

[Teacher]

3.	*[P12]* Says:

<u>October 15th, 2008 at 1:40 am</u>

Yes, [Teacher] I think so. I will work hard to change it when I go back China. The model helps students well understand certain genre. It isn't the one to be memorized. I will make good use of the model and I hope I can change the inappropriate view of Chinese students.

The first journal

[P14] 5029413

Writing has been regarded as one of the most important skills besides listening, speaking, reading as well as thinking in teaching and learning English. It is not only engaging students' thinking, organizing their ideas, and improving writing skills, but also enhancing learning in, thinking in, and reflecting on English language. Therefore, writing is significant.

As all we known, every thing can not be done well without theory and practice. So does writing. So lucky it is – [Teacher] are going to teach more in details about theory and practice of writing. Under her considerate teaching, we will be better or improve in writing with different genres as well as writing skills. However, as a proverb says, "The master lead you and teach you the basic things and you lead yourself to learn more." We are unable to study well without self-study, such as reading more and researching more. Doing a research paper is a good example – in order to finish a research proposal in this trimester, each of us must study with our research topic in terms of finding materials or references, and then, find out the problems within your topic, say why it's important, seek for the solution to your questions and check it works or not. Take myself as an example, brainstorming in writing attracts my attention. However, I just think brainstorming as the first step in process writing approach. It's a pity I am wrong in a sense. Brainstorming with various face exists in every writing approach. For instance, after reading "A Functional Approach to Language" written by Baverly Derewianka, I found brainstorming appearing as pooling information, and it is also displayed Anne Burns's "Genre-Based Approach to Writing and Beginning Adult ESL Learners". Therefore, I have to believe that brainstorming is vital important skill anywhere in writing process.

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Turn back to my research topic, there are several queries waiting for being resolved. Therefore, keep reading or researching daily is essential like "Roman is not built in one day." or "You can not walk further without step by step."
October 08 2008 02:14 am | <u>Week 2</u>

3 Responses to "The first journal"

1.   *[P12]* Says:
<u>October 8th, 2008 at 3:00 am</u>

Dear [P14],
I agree with your opinion on writing theory. The theory is very important and useful. We cannot effectively practise writing and teach writing without accumulating sufficient writing theory.
Certainly, we should build a bridge between theory and practice. I think we have many well chance to apply the theories to our practice. The same as what we do now, we exchange our ideas on internet. In my opinion, it acts as the practice of 'peer feedback' theory. ☺Moreover, we can understand theories well through the practice. I love this way, because all of us are joint negotiation, and then we can learn more from each other. Let's enjoy the practice!;)

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2.   *[Teacher]* Says:
<u>October 14th, 2008 at 11:15 pm</u>

Dear [P14],
You were already very immersed in your topic when you wrote your first journal entry. Such a good student you are. You are going to write a terrific thesis, I'm sure. I won't comment further on this. I'll save it for your proposal, which I must read next. Good luck. Ps I remember your journals in Oral Presentation. so lacking in confidence, so unsure why you were here. How you have "blossomed" since then. The teachers think highly of you and [P12]. It's a pleasure to see!
[Teacher]
[Teacher]

3.   *[P14]* Says:
<u>October 15th, 2008 at 1:18 am</u>

Thanks, [Teacher], I think all the progresses are from all the teachers help, especially you — always encourage me to do what I can, besides, all my dear classmates also give me so much confidence!

From [P16]

Ok. So let's start with .... what now? I missed the first session so not as much to reflect on as the rest of you. hihi. Anyway, seeing you all again in the class really makes me feel 'like before'.

I choose to write about TEACHER FEEDBACK TO STUDENT WRITING as the topic for my Research Paper. The reason is quite simple and plain: I need to study about this so that I can give more effective feedback to the students' papers, at the same time help them benefit more from their work. I've just found out that [P23] also chooses the somewhat same topic as mine. That's so interesting. We can see the issue from different perspective and learn from each other's work. I'm going to look at how we should give feedback, what should be focused on and how we should convey the comments so that the students won't feel discouraged and will be able to utilise them for their next writing.

Another reason is that there are a lot of articles and books written on this topic so I do not have any trouble in finding documents to support my writing.

If you have any idea you want to share, please do. I'll appreciate it a lot.

I hope after this course, I can teach writing, the supposed most difficult skill among the four, better. I remember the time I studied at university, I hate writing lesson because it was rather boring and we were given 'chance' to be lazy. I must say that writing is the skill which requires most energy and thoughts. We have to collect all the linguistic knowledge and other background knowledge we possess. Ughhhh… not easy at all !!!!

I'm interested in [P14]'s topic: brainstorming in writing process. It can not be denied that this step is vital in writing. For me, it is the most important step in every writing of mine. I'm looking forward to your work this time, with many others'. hehe!

October 08 2008 12:19 pm | Week 2

6 Responses to "From [P16]"

1.   *Anonymous* Says:
October 8th, 2008 at 1:33 pm

:)I am also interested in this topic. Feedback is a kind of communication or bridge between teacher and student, and certainly make progress together. However, I am troubled by writing, because lack of linguistic knowledge and other background knowledge. I guess I am still on the way… I am looking forward to gain more through studying with Dear [Teacher] and all of you, my dear friends!

2.   *[P14]* Says:
October 8th, 2008 at 1:34 pm

:)I am also interested in this topic. Feedback is a kind of communication or bridge between teacher and student, and certainly make progress together. However, I am troubled by writing, because lack of linguistic knowledge and other background knowledge. I guess I am still on the way… I am looking forward to gain more through studying with Dear [Teacher] and all of you, my dear friends!

3.   *[P14]* Says:
October 8th, 2008 at 1:35 pm

Sorry, I did not login in at the first time. 😃

4.   *[P12]* Says:
October 8th, 2008 at 2:11 pm

☐ ☐ I am interested in 'feedback' as well. The same as you, my research paper is focused on 'teacher feedback'. AS so many people have discussed, teacher is very important in giving wrting feedback. But I don't think teacher need dominate the feedback. Therefore I choose to stand on the point of student to discuss teacher feedback. Active response by the student is more effective than the mere passive reading of teacher feedback.
haha Anyway, Let's enjoy our research!

5.   *Alisa* Says:
October 8th, 2008 at 10:35 pm

I am looking forward to see your suggestions for teacher's feedback in teaching writing. It is so nice some of you are doing the same topic. I like it too.

6.   *[Teacher]* Says:
October 14th, 2008 at 11:07 pm

Dear [P16] and other commenters,
Now I am almost at the beginning of the postings, and I imagine many will not go back and read what I am writing so late! Meanwhile, we have had a certain amount of talk about feedback as a topic, and [P16] has actually changed her topic! I'm still interested in [P12]'s "active response by the student." How will she bring it about?
cheers,
[Teacher]

from [P18]

About my Research paper I choose the topic 'How to teach students writing classroom" I think that it is a very important thing for teaching. When we have teaching in a classroom, First thing we should think that what to teach and how to teach them, I think that of both is a very important principle for teachers. Not only teaching writing but we can also use this principle to teach reading, listening, and speaking and so on.
About my topic which I was chosen, it's about teaching and learning writing , I think that when they learn to write, they may surface with various issue for writing because they have different background knowledge, culture and experience for writing. We should know about their issues of writing , how to solve these issues. So that teacher will be able to improve, apply and develop his/her teaching writing is better for the next time, including teacher should realize that how to select suitable supporting materials for them,

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how to motivate and encourage them for learning writing as much as possible. So that they will be able to practice and improve their writing learning is better.

I think that giving them have more motivation for writing is rather difficultly for some student who dislike writing ,feel bore and lazy to write a lot. For example when I had teaching them of TP course, students must write their journals at least 2 pages on the topic 'what do you see' and submit me every week. Some student told me that 'I don't really know what to write' because they was used only one topic for writing their journals about 14 weeks (before + after midterm). I think that when they feel bore, they don't want to write because they don't have opportunity to write the other topics and I can't change the topic because A.Denny need this topic and I think that we should give them have more opportunity to write.

However I think that my topic is rather important and I can search more information easily from the many books from RC and library and it 's useful for writing my research paper.
October 08 2008 07:46 pm | Week 2

4 Responses to "from [P18]"

1.   *[P21]* Says:
October 8th, 2008 at 8:18 pm

I think we have to do something to change the way teachers teach writing to Thai students. As we know we did not learn so much when we were in high school. Keep looking for the ideas. See you in class!!!

2.   *[P12]* Says:
October 8th, 2008 at 10:46 pm

Dear [P18],
I think our students can benefit a lot from "what do you see". Because they should write something new with 2 pages weekly, they must learn more new words in order to meet the requirements. In the process of writing, students learn by themselves. Moreover, what they have learned are connecting with real life.
In short, the more students write the more they learn.

3.   *[P14]* Says:
October 8th, 2008 at 11:27 pm

Hi [P18],
I agree with [P12], students indeed acquire related words depending on "what do you see" (describing a particular object) in order to describe one thing in detail. For example, if were asked to write about computer, studnets have to learn vocabulary such as key board, mouse, etc. It is a good way to learn English, isn't it?
However, writing is a hard skill in learning, the more we learn the more we get. Like a proverb says, "Roman can not be built in one day".
By the way, I like your topic, and I am waiting for more on it!
Good night!

4.   *[Teacher]* Says:

Dear [P18],

I am not going to write very much here, because I've already read your next discussion, where you were farther along with your topic and had narrowed it down. But I see: you wrote a bit confusingly here, and yet much better than on that summary, so maybe the problem was, you had to write somebody else's ideas and not your own@ I look forward to reading your proposal!

[Teacher]

hello!!!

How are you? I am very busy writing my research paper proposal. I have decided to look at teacher feedback. The main area I want to look at is how much feedback should be given and how. Really I want to focus on how feedback can be given effectively because I think this will help me to become a good teacher. My main aim as a teacher is to make students want to learn English with me and feel comfortable with me, not scared and intimidated. To do this I feel that giving them good feedback is essential because it will make them see me as a good teacher (I hope). Also giving them the correct level of feedback and using a good method should help.

This topic really interests me because there seems to be no correct answers at the moment (or maybe I don't know hahaha). This will be a good learning curve for me as I have never done a research paper before and I hope I am not setting my target too high. I just want to start to think for myself about how I should run classes in the future and I think that this will give me a good starting block.

Just one more thing does anyone know about how writing checklists can be used in the classroom? ☺

October 08 2008 11:20 pm | Week 2

3 Responses to "hello!!!"

1.   *[P21]* Says:

Sorry I forgot to put my name. This post was by [P21]. (also I am not very good with technology apart from MSN) Good night !!!

2.   *[P14]* Says:

Ha ha, this is also the first time that I write research paper. I am still confused though I have gotten the material telling how to deal with that.

Anyway, the most important thing is that what we are doing for the researching, that is, we are doing our best to do that. And I believe we'll be certainly successful after failure several times as well as long-term research.
Regards!

3.   *[Teacher]* Says:

<u>October 14th, 2008 at 10:47 pm</u>

Dear [P21],

Now I have your proposal but I'm determined to read all these postings first–so you all don't stop writing them because you think the teacher isn't interested! She is, just slow!

Anyway, I think your topic is a good one, but there aren't any right answers, just many many varying ones, so you will have fun sorting them out!

Writing checklists? What kind? they could be for evluating writing according to certain criteria. Is that what you mean? Sure you'll find something in the literature. Check out T. Hedge, oh, a chapter called Writing in a methodology book. I can give you a copy. Remind me.

somehow [P14] is right: you have the chance to get it wrong in our class before you get it right, and that will help you for your thesis next trimester (will you go on to the thesis already? maybe not–you just got here!!!)

Anyway, good luck. Know you'll do well.

[Teacher]