A PORTFOLIO-BASED LEARNER AUTONOMY

DEVELOPMENT MODEL IN AN EFL

WRITING COURSE

Tham My Duong

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English Language Studies

Suranaree University of Technology

Academic Year 2015

รูปแบบการพัฒนาความเป็นเอกเทศของผู้เรียนโดยใช้แฟ้มสะสมงาน
ในวิชาการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษ

นางสาวดำ เมย์ เยือง

A PORTFOLIO-BASED LEARNER AUTONOMY DEVELOPMENT

MODEL IN AN EFL WRITING COURSE

Suranaree University of Technology has approved this thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ถำ เมย์ เยือง : รูปแบบการพัฒนาความเป็นเอกเทศของผู้เรียนโดยใช้แฟ้มสะสมงาน
ในวิชาการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษ (A PORTFOLIO-BASED LEARNER AUTONOMY
DEVELOPMENT MODEL IN AN EFL WRITING COURSE) อาจารย์ที่ปรึกษา :
อาจารย์ ดร.สิรินทร ศรีโพธิ์, 293 หน้า

ภายใต้บริบทของการศึกษาด้านภาษาในศตวรรษที่ 21 ซึ่งการพัฒนาด้านเทคโนโลยีเป็นไป
อย่างรวดเร็วทำให้ผู้เรียนภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาต่างประเทศมีเสรีภาพและเปิดกว้างในการ
ติดต่อสื่อสารทั่วโลกมากขึ้น โดยผู้เรียนภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาต่างประเทศถูกคาดหวังว่าจะ
สามารถแสวงหาความรู้ได้ด้วยตนเองโดยความช่วยเหลือและการเป็นสื่อกลางของเทคโนโลยี
สมัยใหม่ งานวิจัยนี้มีเป้าหมายเพื่อที่จะ (1) ทดสอบว่าแบบจำลองการพัฒนาความเป็นเอกเทศของ
ผู้เรียน โดยใช้แฟ้มสะ สมงาน (PLAD) สามารถช่วยส่งเสริมความเป็นเอกเทศของผู้เรียนและพัฒนา
ความสามารถด้านการเขียนโดยรวมในวิชาการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาต่างประเทศหรือไม่
และ (2) ศึกษาการรับรู้ ของผู้เรียนที่มีต่อแบบจำลอง PLAD และปัจจัยที่ส่งผลต่อการสนับสนุนหรือ
การต่อต้านการใช้แบบจำลอง PLAD ในวิชาการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาต่างประเทศ
งานวิจัยนี้ใช้วิธีการวิจัยแบบผสมผสานโดยมีการเก็บข้อมูลทั้งเชิงปริมาณและเชิงคุณภาพจาก
แบบสอบถามการสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งมีโครงสร้าง แบบทดสอบ และแฟ้มสะสมงาน ผู้เข้าร่วม
งานวิจัยนี้มีจำนวน 35 คน โดยใช้เวลาในการทดลองสอนจำนวน 15 สัปดาห์ สถิติเชิงบรรยาย
(เช่น ค่าเฉลี่ย ค่า เบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน และค่าความถี่/อัตราร้อยละ) และสถิติเชิงอนุมาน (เช่น การ
ทดสอบความแตกต่างค่าเฉลี่ยของกลุ่มตัวอย่างสองกลุ่มไม่อิสระ และการทดสอบอันดับที่มี
เครื่องหมายกำกับของวิลคอกซัน) ถูกนำมาใช้ในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลเชิงปริมาณส่วนข้อมูล
เชิงคุณภาพถูกวิเคราะห์โดยการวิเคราะห์เชิงเนื้อหาจากผลการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลพบผลการวิจัยที่
น่าสนใจสามประการ ประการที่หนึ่งความเป็นเอกเทศของผู้เรียนทั้งสามด้าน ได้แก่ความรู้
การตระหนักรู้ และทักษะ มีการพัฒนาหลังจากการเรียนวิชาการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษที่มีการใช้
แบบจำลอง PLAD โดยเฉพาะการเขียนแบบสะท้อนคิดซึ่งถูกพบว่าเป็นทักษะการเรียนรู้แบบ
เอกเทศที่มีการพัฒนามากที่สุด และการประเมินด้วยตนเองเป็นทักษะที่ท้าทายต่อผู้เข้าร่วมงานวิจัย
มากที่สุด ประการที่สองนอกจากการพัฒนาความเป็นเอกเทศของผู้เรียนแล้ว ยังพบอีกว่า
ความสามารถด้านการเขียนของผู้เข้าร่วมงานวิจัยมีการพัฒนาอย่างมากตลอดทั้งหลักสูตร สำหรับ
กลวิธีการเขียน ได้พบว่าผู้เข้าร่วมงานวิจัยมีแนวโน้มที่จะใช้กลวิธีด้านความ คิด (เช่น การตรวจทาน
การเกาะเกี่ยวความและการเชื่อมโยงความในการเขียนและการถ่ายทอดความคิด จากภาษาเวียดนาม
เป็นภาษาอังกฤษ) กลวิธีด้านความรู้สึก (เช่น การหลีกเลี่ยงการทำผิดพลาด) และกลวิธีด้านสังคม

วัฒนธรรมและการปฏิสัมพันธ์ (เช่น การทำงานกับเพื่อนและ/หรือกับครูผู้สอน) ประการสุดท้ายคือ ผู้เข้าร่วมงานวิจัยมีทัศนคติบวกต่อแบบจำลอง PLAD โดยที่ระดับความสามารถในการพัฒนาความ เป็นเอกเทศของผู้เรียนของแต่ละขั้นตอนสามารถจัดลำดับจากมากไปหาน้อยได้ดังต่อไปนี้: การกำหนดเป้าหมายการเรียนรู้ การเลือกใช้สื่อการเรียนรู้ การประเมินโดยครูผู้สอน การวางแผน การเรียน การเขียนแบบสะท้อนคิด การประเมินโดยเพื่อน และการประเมินด้วยตนเอง นอกจากนี้ ยังพบปัจจัยหลักสามปัจจัยประกอบด้วย ปัจจัยส่วนตัว ปัจจัยด้านการเรียน และปัจจัยภายนอกที่ ส่งผลต่อการใช้แบบจำลอง PLAD ในวิชาการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาต่างประเทศ ซึ่งสามารถอภิปรายเป็นสองแนวความคิดที่ตรงกันข้ามกันดังต่อไปนี้ (1) ปัจจัยที่เกื้อหนุน อาทิ ทักษะที่ได้รับการพัฒนาและการตระหนักรู้เกี่ยวกับความเป็นเอกเทศของผู้เรียน ประโยชน์ของแฟ้ม สะสมงาน และความจำเป็นของการเรียนรู้แบบร่วมมือกัน รวมถึงสภาพแวดล้อมของการเรียนรู้ที่ เป็นมิตร และบทบาทของครูผู้สอนที่เป็นเอกเทศ และ(2) ข้อจำกัดเช่น พฤติกรรมการเรียนรู้ ความสงสัยในประโยชน์ของแฟ้มสะสมงาน จุดอ่อนของการเรียนรู้แบบร่วมมือกัน สภาพการ เรียนรู้ที่ยังไม่สมบูรณ์ และครูผู้สอนในฐานะผู้ประเมิน

สาขาวิชาภาษาต่างประเทศ   ลายมือชื่อนักศึกษา_____

ปีการศึกษา 2558   ลายมือชื่ออาจารย์ที่ปรึกษา_____
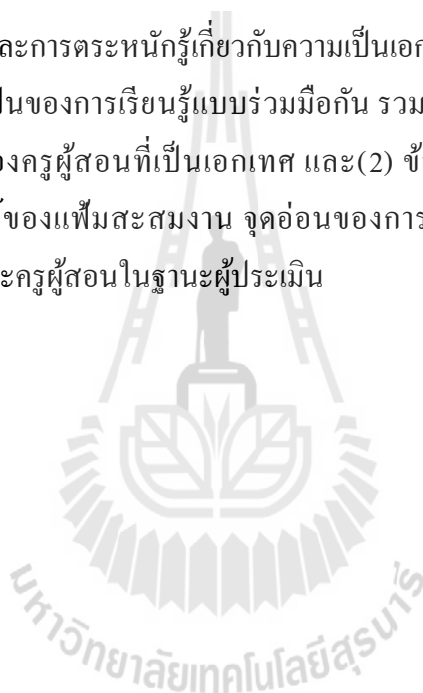
THAM MY DUONG : A PORTFOLIO-BASED LEARNER AUTONOMY

DEVELOPMENT MODEL IN AN EFL WRITING COURSE .

THESIS ADVISOR : SIRINTHORN SEEPHO, Ph.D., 293 PP.

LEARNER AUTONOMY/PORTFOLIOS/WRITING COMPETENCE/MODEL

The present study aims (1) to examine whether the Portfolio-based Learner

Autonomy Development (PLAD) model can help to promote learner autonomy and

improve overall writing competence in an EFL writing course and (2) to explore

learners' perceptions of the PLAD model and factors influencing their support for or

resistance to using the PLAD model in an EFL writing course.

Mixed-methods research was employed in this study, i.e., both quantitative

and qualitative data were collected from questionnaires, semi-structured interviews,

tests, and portfolios. There were 35 research participants participating in the 15-week

experimental teaching. As for data analysis, descriptive statistics (e.g., mean, standard

deviation, and frequencies/percentages) and inferential statistics (e.g., paired samples

t-test and Wilcoxon signed ranks test) were used to analyze quantitative data, whereas

qualitative data were analyzed through content analysis.

This study revealed three significant findings. First learner autonomy in

terms of three dimensions of *knowledge*, *awareness*, and *skills* was developed as a

result of the use of the PLAD model in the writing course, especially writing

reflections was the most developed autonomous learning skill. However,

self-assessment was the most challenging skill which the participants encountered. Second, the participants' writing competence was found to improve considerably throughout the course. Regarding writing strategies, the participants tended to use cognitive strategies (e.g., assuring coherence and cohesion in writing and translating ideas from Vietnamese to English), affective strategies (e.g., avoiding mistakes), and sociocultural-interactive strategies (e.g., working with peers and/or the teacher). Third, the participants held positive attitudes toward the PLAD model. Specifically, the levels of contribution of the autonomy-related steps to learner autonomy development were ranked in a descending order: setting learning goals, choosing learning materials, teacher assessment, creating a study plan, writing reflections, conducting peer assessment, and conducting self-assessment. Additionally, the factors influencing the application of the PLAD model in an EFL writing class were examined and discussed from two opposing viewpoints: (1) supportive factors (e.g., developed skills and awareness of learner autonomy, positive feedback on the use of portfolio, necessity of collaborative learning, non-threatening learning atmosphere, and teacher's autonomy-oriented role) and (2) constraints (e.g., learning behaviors, doubt about the usefulness of portfolio, disadvantages of collaborative learning, inconvenient learning conditions, and teacher as an assessor). These sub-factors were categorized into three major factors, including personal factors, academic factors, and external factors.

School of Foreign Languages   Student's Signature_____

Academic Year 2015   Advisor's Signature_____

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

me great cooperation and help with the data collection for both the pilot study and the main study.

All my friends at Suranaree University of Technology deserve a special mention as they have, over three years, provided me with kind help and good friendship.

Last but not least, I am indebted to my family, especially my father, Mr. Duong Thai Binh, and my mother, Mrs. Huynh Thi Ngoc Dien, who have sacrificed their whole lives for the happiness of their children, for their unconditional love. I would also like to express my appreciation to my parents-in-law, my aunt, my siblings, and my siblings-in-law for their understanding and timely encouragement. This thesis is specially dedicated to my beloved husband, Mr. Tran Quoc Thao, who was doing a doctorate at Suranaree University of Technology, Thailand with me. Frankly speaking, my thesis would not have been completed as expected without my husband's great spiritual support.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CALL	Computer-Assisted Language Learning
CELLL	Centre on Lifelong Learning
CFS	Center for Foreign Studies
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
FFL	Faculty of Foreign Languages
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GPA	Grade Point Average
HERA	The *Higher Education* Reform Agenda *2006-2020*
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
ISD	Instructional Design
LAT	Learner Autonomy Training
LCD	Liquid-Crystal Display
L1	First language
L2	Second language
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
NLU	Nong Lam University
NLU-HCM	Nong Lam University-Ho Chi Minh city
SEAMEO	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
WTO	World Trade Organization

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter first provides a background of the study including a brief introduction of the Vietnamese educational system and English language teaching and learning in Vietnam. Then statement of the problem, rationale of the study, research objectives, research questions, and significance of the research project are presented. Finally, a definition of terms is included.

1.1 Background of the Study

To provide the background to the Vietnamese educational system as well as English language learning and teaching in Vietnam, the educational objectives targeted in different periods from Vietnam's Independence Day in 1975 to the present day are highlighted.

1.1.1 Vietnamese Educational System

Even though Vietnam encountered several problems after the declaration of independence in 1945, the government attempted to reinforce aspects such as politics, economy, education, and society. It was supposed that the political changes would lead to economic and educational changes. In 1986, the implementation of the Doi Moi (renovation) policy was a historic decision for Vietnam's economy and education. Vietnam's economic development might be attributed to this historic policy referring to the shift from central planning in the Soviet tradition to a regulated market economy.

The fact that Vietnam has been a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) since January 11, 2007 is identified as a prominent milestone in its integration into the global economy. As a result, Vietnam has recently been "one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, with recent annual growth rates in real GDP of over 7 per cent" (Hayden & Lam, 2010, p. 15).

Together with rapid economic development, the Vietnamese educational system has changed considerably in terms of scale, focus, and types of schools since 1993. For instance, the government has encouraged the establishment of large, comprehensive, and research-oriented universities/institutions in lieu of small and specialized ones. Apart from public higher education institutions, semi-public and non-public institutions were established to meet the high demands of the market, yet there are two common types of schools currently in Vietnam which are public and non-public schools. Public schools are owned by the state and supported by the government, whereas non-public ones are owned by communities, and they are funded by tuition fees. Despite the different types of financial support, both types of schools are under the management of Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), which is responsible for teaching standards, curricula, fields of training, admissions and recruitment policies.

The current Vietnamese educational system is composed of five levels, namely preschool, primary school, secondary school, high school, and higher education. Basic education from primary school to high school consists of twelve years, i.e., five years of primary school, four years of secondary school and three years of high school. In order to receive higher education, high school students need to pass the university entrance exams according to the groups of subjects they choose (e.g., groups A, B, C, D1, D2, D3, D4, D5, D6, H, M, N, R, S, T, and V). For example, group D1 includes

Mathematics, Literature, and English. When students pass the entrance exams, they are generally required to finish their training programs within four years of eight terms. As far as teaching methods are concerned, the teacher-directed method is mostly used in the public system from primary education to tertiary education. This means that students seem to be reactive in the classroom and class discussions among students are quite rare.

Regarding higher education in Vietnam, globalization requires university students to equip themselves with intellectual, competitive and innovative capacities. Hence, on behalf of the government, MOET has developed and promoted a project named '*The Higher Education Reform Agenda 2006-2020'* (HERA). The overall goal of HERA is to "undertake a process of profound renewals in the areas of the quantity, quality and effectiveness in order to meet all the demands of industrialization, modernization, global economic integration and society's demand for learning opportunities" (Pham, 2010, p. 51) so that Vietnam will have an educational system that is "advanced by international standards, highly competitive, and appropriate to the socialist-oriented market mechanism" by 2020 (ibid., p. 52).

1.1.2 English Language Teaching and Learning in Vietnam

The learning and teaching of English language in Vietnam is classified into two main phases: Pre-Doi Moi (before 1986) and Doi Moi (from 1986 up to the present). The pre-Doi Moi stage should be divided into two landmark periods: The 1954 – 1975 period and the 1975 – 1986 period. In the first period, Vietnam was divided into two parts: North and South. While North Vietnam was allied with the former Soviet Union, South Vietnam was allied with the United States. The development of foreign languages was affected by political differences. In particular, Russian was the dominant foreign

language in Vietnam's schools in North Vietnam though four languages (e.g., Russian, Chinese, English, and French) were considered the important languages, whereas English was the commonly used foreign language in South Vietnam in secondary schools and at tertiary level. The second period was known as the period of Russian language. The number of learners who enrolled in Russian courses increased rapidly in both the North and the South, and hundreds of teachers and students were educated in the former Soviet Union that offered educational aid to Vietnam. Meanwhile, the importance of the English language in Vietnam has declined since reunification in 1975 because the American army withdrew from the South. A limited number of Vietnamese teachers and interpreters of English were sent to Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and India for further studies in English language teaching (e.g., Do, 2006; Hoang, 2013).

Contrary to the decline of English language in the first phase, the second phase was characterized by the growth of English language in every aspect of Vietnam. By means of the Doi Moi policy that aimed at opening the door to welcome foreign investment, economic improvements helped to develop the teaching and learning of English throughout the whole country. English has been a compulsory subject in the official curricula from secondary schools to universities for a long time. Apart from being a compulsory subject at school, English has been studied for other purposes, as Harmer (1998) points out, students learn English for a specific purpose such as tourism, banking, or business, not only because it is a mandatory requirement. In recent years, an increasing number of foreign enterprises have been established in Vietnam, so the ability to communicate in English has become necessary in order to obtain a good job. In brief, English has become the dominant language in the context of the open door policy.

One of the major decisions in the teaching and learning of English was Decision No. 1400/QĐ-TTg on the national educational plan for "*Teaching and Learning Foreign Languages in the National Educational System, Period 2008-2020*" issued by the Deputy Prime Minister on September 30, 2008. The national educational plan was implemented after the HERA project, which is divided into three stages. The first stage (2008-2010) aims at developing a ten-year foreign language curriculum, writing a foreign language textbook, and preparing for piloting the curriculum from the third grade to he tertiary level; the second stage (2011-2015) focuses on the implementation of the ten-year foreign language curriculum into the educational system across the country; and the goal of the third stage (2016-2020) is to make adjustments to the ten-year foreign language curriculum and to develop intensive programs for vocational schools, colleges, and universities. In short, the ultimate goal of the national educational plan is for Vietnamese students to master the English language by 2020.

With reference to English major programs at tertiary level in Vietnam, Decision No. 36/2004/QĐ-BGD-ĐT states that the overall training goal is to provide students with background knowledge, professional skills, political and ethical characteristics, and professional behavior so that they can work effectively in specialized areas in which English is used for communication. The curriculum of a bachelor's degree in English in a Vietnamese university has to strictly follow the training framework issued by the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training. Specifically, the curriculum contains two phases: (1) general knowledge and (2) specialized knowledge. Students are required to take all courses in the first phase, whereas they can choose the sub-major they are interested in, e.g., TESOL, Interpretation and Translation, and Business Management in the second phase.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Within the context of foreign language teaching and learning in Asia, learners are individuals whose learning styles and preferences are based on the values of collectivism, conformity, and respect for authority (Benson, et al., 2003). This means that Asian learners seem to be teacher-dependent in their learning process. Littlewood (1999) further indicates that Asian learners possess reactive autonomy in which learners organize their resources autonomously to achieve their goals, but they cannot be responsible for their own learning, such as setting their goals, selecting what to learn, and reflecting on what s/he has acquired like those who have proactive autonomy.

In the context of Vietnam, the Grammar-Translation method, the Direct method, and the Audio-Lingual method have dominated the national educational system for a long time. In foreign language education, these methods are viewed as the traditional or teacher-centered teaching methods where the teacher is the authority in a classroom, or the teacher provides students with a good model for imitation (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). This means that the teacher plays a role as a knowledge provider, a leader, a feedback giver, an evaluator, or even an authoritarian in a classroom, whereas learners are expected to be good listeners and imitators. On the one hand, the teacher-centered teaching style was strongly influenced by the perception amongst Vietnamese intellectuals in the feudal period that the teacher's position was only lower than that of the king. On the other hand, the allotted time for class meetings is quite tight, so the teacher needs to direct the class activities and focus on the main content for examinations rather than on extra activities (Dang, 2012). Apparently, autonomous learning cannot be promoted in a language learning and teaching context in which learners hardly ever have opportunities to make decisions about their own learning. In

other words, EFL learners cannot become autonomous if they are too dependent on the teacher. In fact, Dang (2012) discovered that English majors appear to be unfamiliar with learning activities and assignments which do not provide help from the teacher. That is to say, they are not competent and confident enough to take control of their learning. Additionally, one of the Vietnamese learners' weaknesses is the ability to find resources for their learning. It seems that they are only with the materials provided by their teachers rather than endeavoring to search for what they need.

In brief, learning and teaching styles cause various problems in language education. Hence, it is necessary to find a method to help learners to become more proactive and independent in their learning, and learner autonomy is seen as the effective solution to this problem.

1.3 Rationale for the Study

In the first decade of the 21st century, rapid technological development led to social change. According to Lian (2011), the world is changing "at an unprecedented rate (largely through better communication and better understanding often facilitated and mediated by modern technology)." (p. 5). In fact, today's technology with a variety of tools (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Google, YouTube, etc.) provides learners with freedom and openness to communicate with each other and completely or partially involves them in their own learning wherever they are, e.g., at home, through computers, or via a cellphone.

In addition, individual differences should be taken into consideration because it is assumed that each individual has his/her own characteristics. For example, McWhorter (1998) differentiates the characteristics of passive and active learners in

dealing with a writing task. While active learners are able to decide what is important to write and expand their written work with their knowledge and experience of the topic, passive learners tend to follow the teacher's instruction with the aim of obtaining a good grade. Given individual differences, responsibility for learning outcomes should be taken by learners rather than the teacher because it is believed that learners themselves will be more aware of their expectations, their strengths and weaknesses, and their problems. Meanwhile, the teacher can raise learners' awareness of what they are handling and give them counseling when needed. In this sense, individual differences are associated with learner autonomy.

As a result of the above-mentioned reasons, the concept of learner autonomy is supposed to be important within the changing landscape of English teaching in the 21st century, and advocates of learner autonomy believe that it plays an important role for life-long learning. Therefore, there have been a number of studies on learner autonomy. In Asian EFL contexts, aspects of learner autonomy have recently been gradually promoted in the educational systems of Asian countries. In particular, as the host of the 47th SEAMEO Council Conference held in Hanoi, Vietnam in 2013, Vietnam created the policy forum named '*Lifelong Learning: Vision and Policy*' in which the experiences and perspectives on the implementation of lifelong learning in Southeast Asia and other regions were proposed. The memorandum of agreement on the foundation of the new SEAMEO centre was also officially signed by the Vietnamese Minister of Education and Training and the Director of SEAMEO Secretariat at the conference. The centre is located in Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam with the title of '*SEAMEO Centre on Lifelong Learning*' (SEAMEO CELL). This means that learner autonomy has been paid close attention in language education in Asian countries, particularly in

Vietnam. In addition, Vietnamese learners have recently received greater opportunities to use English for communication, thus there should be a strong focus on learner-centered approaches in which learners are able to take control of their own learning and then use the target language effectively and confidently in different social contexts.

In order to foster learner autonomy, tools for the management of the language learning process, including portfolios, learning contracts, and on-line learning environments (e.g., blogs, Facebook, web 2.0, etc.) should be developed and used in tandem with teaching/learning approaches. Undoubtedly, such rapid technological development has led to changes in society and, especially, in education; thus, the technology-based learning tools have placed a great emphasis on second or foreign language research. Likewise, the benefits of portfolios have been explored in a variety of studies as either a learning tool and/or an assessment tool in language learning. It is believed that a portfolio can "provide a tangible way of making sense of past and present experiences, putting learning in context, and capturing and displaying the learning that has taken place" (Jones & Shelton, 2011, p. 5). More importantly, a portfolio is identified as a powerful educational tool that helps students to develop an ability to take charge of their own learning.

In reference to research on learner autonomy, there have been several studies which address how to promote learner autonomy, yet few studies have investigated the effects of portfolios on the development of learner autonomy and writing ability. In essence, to the best knowledge of the researcher, although there has been one study by Lam (2013) introducing a conceptual model of developing learner autonomy and writing ability through portfolio assessment, this model has not been implemented in a real class yet.

In addition, writing skill deserves mention in this study since the skill of writing in a foreign or second language is not easily acquired. Research has revealed that many Vietnamese learners face difficulties with academic writing at school (e.g., Luong & Nguyen, 2008; Nguyen, 2009). Furthermore, candidates probably find it difficult to write in English when they apply for a job (i.e., writing a cover letter, a curriculum vitae, or documents in English). It is thus assumed that Vietnamese learners' writing skills may hinder them from getting a good job. However, it is presumed that the writing skill is not too challenging if both teachers and students can grasp the purpose of writing activities, adapt these activities and make decisions about activities that best suit them.

As a result of the above-discussed reasons, this study predominantly attempts to construct a learner autonomy development model based on Lam's (2013) the conceptual model, Huitt's (2003) model of teaching/learning process, and instructional design models which are considered a systematic process of designing objectives, developing instructional strategies, developing materials and media, and conducting evaluation to explore whether or not learner autonomy and writing skills can be developed by the use of a portfolio as a learning and assessment tool in an EFL writing course. Then the model may serve as a guideline that teachers use to help develop learner autonomy and writing skills.

1.4 Research Objectives

Given the lack of research on the promotion of learner autonomy in the Vietnamese EFL context, this study aims:

1. To examine whether the PLAD model can help to promote learner autonomy and improve overall writing competence in an EFL writing course; and

2. To explore learners' perceptions of the PLAD model and factors influencing their support for or resistance to using the PLAD model in an EFL writing course.

1.5 Research Questions

In order to achieve the earlier-mentioned objectives, the following research questions are formulated.

1. Does the PLAD model help to develop learner autonomy in an EFL writing course? If so, how?

2. Does the PLAD model help to develop learners' writing competence during the course? If so, how? Which writing strategies are the most preferred by the learners?

3. What are the learners' perceptions of the PLAD model? What factors contribute to their support for or resistance to promoting learner autonomy through the use of a portfolio in the writing course?

1.6 Significance of the Study

First, it is hoped that the knowledge concerning learner autonomy, writing, and portfolios that the teacher researcher introduced in this study can raise learners' awareness of independent learning in an EFL writing course. Moreover, the PLAD model is a process-oriented training in which learners can develop their autonomous learning skills step by step through the use of portfolios in the writing course. As a result, they can apply what they learn from the writing course into other language courses such as reading, speaking, listening, and grammar or even specialized courses

(e.g., American Studies, Business Communication). This is due to the fact that the ultimate goal for the training course is to help learners to promote their autonomy in the learning process, i.e., they can be aware of and reflect on their own learning, they can self-manage their learning, and they can make choices about issues relating to their learning.

Secondly, the results of this study may increase the confidence of those administrators and teachers who acknowledge the importance of learner autonomy in 21st century language learning. The findings will probably raise the administrators' awareness of related issues such as teacher training, curriculum development, and material design for promoting learner autonomy. Accordingly, teachers can deploy their knowledge of learner autonomy, particularly the learner autonomy development model into the language training process in the same context as that of the present study or in different contexts.

Finally, the concept of learner autonomy should be taken into consideration in the Vietnamese EFL context. It is worth noting that there have not been any studies addressing the construction of a training model to develop learner autonomy through portfolios in the Vietnamese EFL context in general or in the university, in which this study was undertaken in particular. Hence, this study should provide an initial example for the promotion of learner autonomy in this context.

1.7 Definition of Terms

An autonomous learner: In this study, an autonomous learner is an individual who is able to set long-term and short-term learning goals, develop study plans, choose learning strategies to achieve those goals, self-assess their own progress, work

cooperatively, monitor their progress, reflect on their own learning, and select relevant resources and support. This definition is based on that of several researchers (e.g., Benson, 2001; Gardner & Miller, 1999; Scharle & Szabó, 2000; Wenden, 1991).

English majors: In this study, the term 'English majors' refers to Vietnamese second-year students majoring in English at Nong Lam University, Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam.

PLAD model: This abbreviation stands for Portfolio-based Learner Autonomy Development model which aims at developing learner autonomy in an EFL writing course by using portfolios as a learning and assessment tool. Specifically, learners will make decisions about their learning (e.g., materials, learning activities, documents included in portfolios, learning goals, study plans) throughout the course which focuses on the writing of short essays.

Portfolio: This refers to a collection of written work in which learners will collect all relevant documents for their writing and choose writing pieces for the sake of their writing development. In particular, a portfolio includes writing drafts (e.g., first drafts, revised drafts, final drafts), artifacts (e.g., articles, advertisements, photos, etc.), and reflection and self-assessment (e.g., writing logs and an end-of-course reflection). The teacher will assess the learners' portfolios on the basis of the predetermined criteria (see Appendix M).

Writing course: The writing course in this study, which is called Writing III, focuses on writing short academic essays.

1.8 Summary

With the aim of providing readers with an overall introduction to this study, the background information concerning the Vietnamese educational system and the context of English language education in Vietnam over time was described. Furthermore, the statement of the problem was presented. Next, the changing and dynamic landscape of ELT in the 21st century and an unexpected research gap was also introduced to indicate the pressing reason for conducting the present study. The research objectives and questions were included so that readers can understand the key issues that the researcher would like to address. Then the significance of the study was presented with a focus on the expected benefits the study would provide. The chapter ended with the definition of the terms used in this study. The next chapter will present the relevant literature review and a summary of previous studies which support the whole study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a theoretical background for the present study by reviewing the related literature on learner autonomy, writing skills, portfolios, and previous studies. First of all, the concept of learner autonomy, which includes its definition, the characteristics of an autonomous language learner, and autonomous learning assessment is taken into consideration. Secondly, the nature of writing in EFL/ESL teaching, approaches to the teaching of writing, cognition and collaboration in EFL/ESL writing, and writing assessment are reviewed. Thirdly, portfolios regarded as a learning and evaluation tool are discussed in a separate section. Fourthly, instructional design models, including the ADDIE model, the Dick and Carey systems approach model, and the ASSURE model are also included. Last but not least, it is necessary to provide a summary of previous studies from which some useful lessons can be learned and a research gap can be identified.

2.1 The Concept of Learner Autonomy

With the aim of providing readers with a brief introduction of the concept of learner autonomy, it is vital to discuss definitions of learner autonomy, the characteristics of an autonomous learner, and autonomous learning assessment.

2.1.1 Definition of Learner Autonomy

There has been a debate on the definition of learner autonomy in language learning with different perspectives. In111 other words, it is not easy to give a precise definition of learner autonomy. The concept of autonomy first came into language teaching in the late 1960s. Until 1981, however, the first definition of autonomy in learning was provided by Holec (1981, as cited in Nunan, 1997) stating that learner autonomy is "an ability to take charge of one's own learning" (p. 193). This definition, which referred to the decision-making abilities concerning management and organization of learning, has directed later research on learner autonomy. Along the same lines, Rivers and Golonka (2009) refer to learner autonomy as "the active, independent management of learning […] where the learner sets or attempts to control the goals, curriculum, pedagogical method, or content of the learning program" (p. 255). That is, learner autonomy can be understood as self-management involving decision-making abilities that a learner needs to possess.

Apart from decision-making abilities, Macaro (1997) relates learner autonomy to learner responsibility for learning management as follows.

> It is an ability to take charge of one's own language learning and an ability to recognize the value of taking responsibility for one's own objectives, content, progress, method and techniques of learning. It is also an ability to be responsible for the pace and rhythm of learning and the evaluation of the learning process (p. 168).

In order to foster learner autonomy, it is necessary to develop a sense of responsibility and encourage learners themselves to make decisions about their learning (Scharle & Szabó, 2000). Furthermore, autonomous learners are responsible for not

only all decisions relating to their learning but also implementations of their decisions (e.g., Dickinson, 1987; Nunan, 1997).

However, Benson (2001) argues that it is insufficient to view learner autonomy as an ability to make decisions about or an ability to take responsibility for learning management. According to him, learner autonomy is "the capacity to take control of one's own learning" (p. 47). Specifically, he asserts that the nature of autonomy consists of three clearly interdependent aspects: Learning management, cognitive process, and learning content. This means that an autonomous learner is assumed to be able to take control over her/his learning management, cognitive process, and learning content. In particular, Benson's (2001) definition refers to the psychological dimension and the learning content which are often absent in most definitions of autonomy. The details of these aspects are described later (see Figure 2.2).

As far as aspects of learner autonomy in language learning are concerned, Littlewood (1997) presents a model with three aspects of autonomy: (1) 'autonomy as a communicator', (2) 'autonomy as a learner', and (3) 'autonomy as a person' that are elaborated by six additional factors placed around these types as displayed in Figure 2.1.
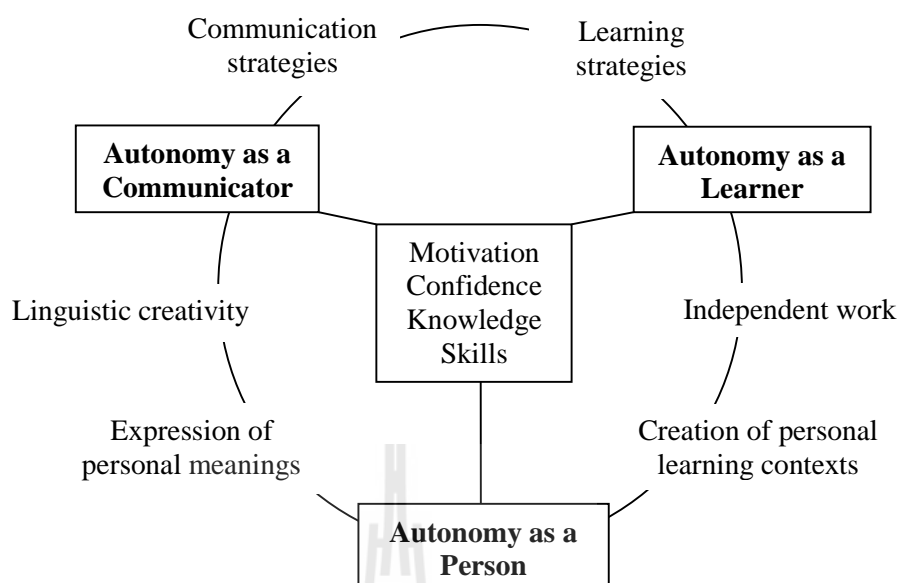
Figure 2.1 A framework for developing autonomy in foreign language learning

(Littlewood, 1997, p. 83)

The purpose of 'autonomy as a communicator' is to help learners to develop an ability to deal with languages independently. In order to demonstrate their independence as communicators, they need to use language creatively or use appropriate strategies for communicating meanings in specific situations. The focus of 'autonomy as a learner' is on helping students to develop an ability to take responsibility for their own learning as independent learners. It depends on an ability to work independently and an ability to use appropriate learning strategies both inside and outside the classroom. As for 'autonomy as a person', students are able to develop an ability to communicate and learn independently. In foreign language learning, when students can express personal meanings and create personal learning contexts, it means that they act as independent individuals. According to Littlewood (1997), a language teacher's task is to help students to develop confidence, motivation, knowledge, and

skills in order that they can communicate independently, learn independently, and become independent individuals.

Likewise, Macaro (2008) determines three dimensions of L2 autonomy: (1) 'autonomy of language competence', (2) 'autonomy of language learning competence', and (3) 'autonomy of learner choice'. The first refers to an ability to use communication strategies appropriately in an L2 situation. The second is about the ability to use learning strategies (i.e., cognitive and metacognitive strategies) effectively. The last reflects control over either the language to be learned or the goal and purpose of that learning.

While Littlewood (1997) and Macaro (2008) focus more on language acquisition than capacities to develop learner autonomy, Benson (2001) puts a great emphasis on capacities that learners are required to achieve for autonomous learning. He claims, "[a]utonomy also implies that self-management and control over cognitive processes should involve decisions concerning the content of learning" (p. 50). Learning content is separately discussed as a third vital element in autonomous learning since it is believed that if a learner can control learning activities but not learning content, they may fail to be a fully autonomous learner. Accordingly, Benson's (2001) model of learner autonomy shown in Figure 2.2 includes three levels of control over learning management, control over the cognitive process, and control over the learning content. Control over learning management refers to self-management of learning in which learners are assumed to manage the planning, organization, and evaluation of their learning with learning strategies. Control over cognitive process is understood as the psychology of learning which consists of attention or awareness, reflection, and metacognitive knowledge. Control over learning content "involves the learner in social

interactions regarding the right to determine and implement their own learning goals"
(ibid., p. 102). Hence, it requires teachers and education authorities to create situational
contexts where learners are encouraged to make decisions about their learning content.
Learners are also required to develop their capacities to participate in negotiation for
the right to self-determine their learning.
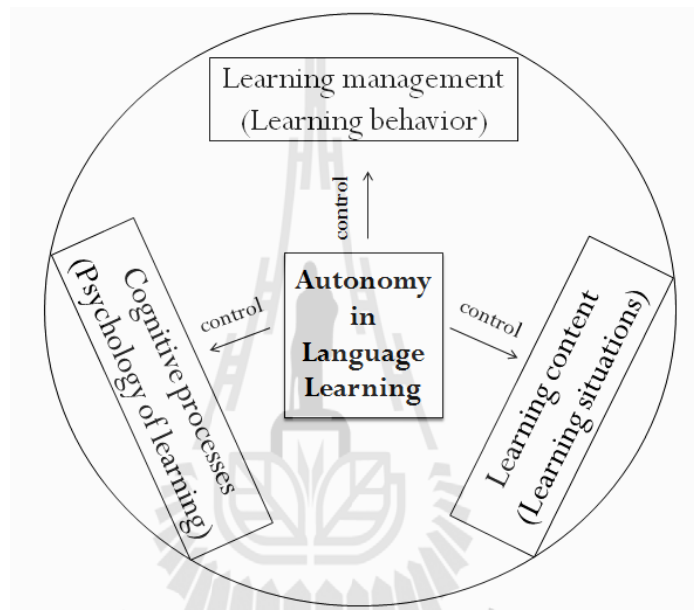
Figure 2.2 Defining autonomy: The capacity to take control over learning

(Benson, 2001, p. 47)

Furthermore, Nunan (1997) does not simply mention aspects of learner
autonomy but also discusses learner autonomy in five different levels as described in
Table 2.1. The first level refers to the attempt to make learners aware of goals,
strategies, and content of materials used during a course. The second level is to get
learners involved in making choices from a variety of goals, content, and strategies.
The third level is to encourage learners to adapt and modify the goals and the content
of the learning program. At the next level, learners can set their own goals, develop

their own content, and create learning tasks. The last level is for fully autonomous

learners since they can make connections between the content of classroom learning

and the world. Nunan (1997) states that levels of autonomy can depend on personality,

goals, institutional philosophy, and cultural context. In addition, these levels can vary

within a single language skill like reading, writing, speaking, and writing. (Gardner &

Miller, 1999).

Table 2.1 Autonomy: Levels of Implementation

Level	Learner Action	Content	Process
1	Awareness	Learners are made aware of the pedagogical goals and content of the materials they are using.	Learners identify strategy implications of pedagogical tasks and identify their own preferred learning styles/strategies
2	Involvement	Learners are involved in selecting their own goals from a range of alternatives on offer.	Learners make choices among a range of options.
3	Intervention	Learners are involved in modifying and adapting the goals and contents of the learning program.	Learners modify/adapt tasks.
4	Creation	Learners create their own goals and objectives.	Learners create their own tasks.
5	Transcendence	Learners go beyond the classroom and make links between the content of classroom learning and the world.	Learners become teachers and researchers.

(Nunan, 1997, p. 195)

In conclusion, to become autonomous learners, students should possess the

ability to make decisions concerning the management, organization, and evaluation of

their learning, the ability to take notice of and responsibility for their own learning, and

the ability to take control over learning content. Accordingly, the present study relies

primarily on Benson's (2001) definition because it is likely to be adequately defined, i.e., this definition covers most of the characteristics of learner autonomy that are presented by the aforementioned scholars. Furthermore, Nunan's (1997) categorization is seen as a basic framework for developing learner autonomy in the current study. Hence, both the knowledge of learner autonomy and that of degrees of learner autonomy should be given to students in learner training prior to the course. For the scope of this study, it is supposed that learners may raise their awareness of learner autonomy and then carry out autonomous learning tasks by themselves after the writing course.

2.1.2 Characteristics of an Autonomous Language Learner

As Gardner and Miller (1999) point out, roles of learners have dramatically changed regarding autonomous learning. Therefore, learners need to be aware of their central role in making decisions related to their learning and taking responsibility for their learning. To provide an overall picture of learner roles, several studies addressing characteristics of an autonomous learner are discussed. Gardner and Miller (1999, p. vii) characterize autonomous learners as those who "initiate the planning and implementation of their own learning program". More specifically, autonomous learners are believed to have capacity to self-manage, self-monitor, and self-assess their learning (e.g., Little, 2001; Rubin & Thompson, 1994). Benson (2001) argues that an autonomous learner not only performs the actions associated with self-management and cognitive capacities like reflecting, directing attention to some aspects (i.e., raising awareness or consciousness), and building metacognitive knowledge but also gets involved in making choice of learning content.

In a different approach, Wenden (1991) describes the characteristics of an autonomous learner with the possession of metacognitive strategies (e.g., planning, monitoring, and evaluation) that enable learners to self-monitor their learning, knowledge about learning (Donovan & Bransford, 2005), and attitudes that enable them to make use of these strategies and knowledge properly, confidently, flexibly, and independently of a teacher.

According to Scharle and Szabó (2000), autonomous learners have to keep in mind the idea that their learning progress is based on their own efforts. They also need to cooperate with the teacher and others in a learning group. They have to consciously monitor their progress and make use of any opportunities for their benefits, e.g., classroom activities and homework.

With the aim of helping learners to achieve high degrees of autonomy, the relationship between the teacher and the learners as well as the teacher's roles in language learning should be properly taken into account. According to Ganza (2008), "[l]earner autonomy is an achievement, attained interrelationally between the learner and the teacher" (p. 65). This means that without the teacher's counseling and guide, the learning process may cause low efficiency or even fall into disorder. In addition, the teacher has been viewed as a manager of resources in the establishment of life-long learning (Longworth, 2003). In general, the teacher is identified as a facilitator, a counselor, and a resource in promoting learner autonomy (e.g., Little, 2004; Voller, 1997). As a facilitator, the teacher can help learners to plan and carry out their own learning, such as setting objectives, selecting materials, evaluating their learning, etc. The teacher can also help them to acquire the skills and knowledge to implement the items above. As a counselor, the teacher gives advice so that learners can achieve

learning efficiency. As a resource, the teacher provides learners with information when necessary or helps them to solve their problems. In brief, different roles have to be applied at different stages to serve the different needs of individual students.

To sum up, the common characteristics of an autonomous learner as summarized from these researchers are monitoring their progress, self-assessing their learning performance, reflecting on their own learning, developing study plans, identifying and developing learning strategies to achieve those goals, setting learning goals, working cooperatively, and selecting relevant resources and support. Meanwhile, a teacher should play a role as a facilitator, a counselor, and a resource manager so as to help learners to possess the characteristics mentioned earlier.

2.1.3 Assessment Tools of Learner Autonomy

According to Benson (2001), if learner autonomy can be defined and described with three aspects of control over learning, the degree to which a language learner becomes autonomous can be measured. Such a measure serves as a tool to identify the development of autonomy (ibid.). With the aim to evaluate how autonomous learners are, it is essential to review types of common assessment tools and consider issues of learner autonomy.

As far as assessment tools for measuring learner autonomy are concerned, classroom observation is used for measuring autonomous learning. Observation can help the teacher to evaluate students' learning progress (Lipson & Wixson, 2009) and/or learner autonomy development (Benson, 2001). In other words, the development of learner autonomy over time can be measured through observation. Observing students' performance in natural contexts of learning is recognized as one of the best ways to measure degrees of learner autonomy (Benson, 2001).

In addition, a self-report questionnaire, a guided listening journal, and a guided learner diary are referred to as necessary self-assessment tools (Nunan, et al., 1999). These tools are discussed in relation to listening skills. The main aim of the self-report questionnaire is to raise learners' awareness regarding their perceptions of listening skills, attitudes and views toward the learning of listening skills, strengths and weaknesses in listening, learning needs, and readiness for conducting self-directed learning in improving listening skills. The focus of the guided listening journal is on directing learners' attention to aspects, such as selecting learning materials, setting learning objectives, identifying learning problems, developing listening strategies, and self-assessing the learning outcomes. Meanwhile, the guided learner's diary places an emphasis on reflective skills, because learners need to reflect on their reactions to the learning activity, the approach being used, the outcome of learning efforts, and suggestions for future actions. In short, it is likely that these assessment tools refer to cognitive processes, one of the three aspects in Benson's (2001) definition of learner autonomy.

Benson (2001) also presents a list of instruments used for the development of self-assessment in general, including self-marked tests, progress cards, self-rating scales, and diaries or logs because self-assessment is seen as a primary theme in the literature on autonomy as well as on language testing.

Accordingly, self-assessment tools are employed in the current study to evaluate how learners become autonomous in their learning. The first self-assessment tool is a questionnaire about autonomous learning which is conducted to evaluate to what extent learners gain autonomous leaning abilities (e.g., an ability to set their goals, create a study plan, etc.). The details of the survey are discussed in section 3.7.1.

The second self-assessment tool is a type of reflection provided in a writing log. This is recognized as one of the effective tools for assessment since it is used to analyze students' efforts and to plan for improvements in their learning processes. Moreover, Benson (2001) claims that reflection is "an important component of autonomous learning at a number of levels" (p. 95). Hence, entries in reflection written by learners aim to record and reflect on their own learning, and then to evaluate their autonomy. Reflection gives learners opportunities to reflect on their autonomous learning (e.g., setting goals, creating a study plan, making choices of learning activities and materials, etc.) and the outcome of learning efforts (i.e., writing ability). Reflection is often accompanied by a portfolio because without reflection, a portfolio can have little meaning or it may just become a scrapbook (Bullock & Hawk, 2005).

Regarding the benefits of self-assessment relating to autonomous learning, Gardner (2000) asserts that self-assessment first helps learners to monitor their learning progress. In other words, they know what to do about their learning. In addition to decisions regarding what to learn, when to learn, and how to learn, learners can decide what to assess, when to assess, and how to assess through self-assessment. Secondly, learners' motivation can be improved due to self-assessment. When learners monitor their learning progress, they are able to recognize their level of success. It is believed that success is a result of confidence and motivation. Finally, self-assessment provides learners with opportunities for reflection on learning. Through self-assessment, learners can get personalized feedback on learning strategies, learning activities, and learning materials. Then they can evaluate their approach to learning based on the feedback. Furthermore, it is essential for learners to reflect on their learning goals, strategies, and

achievements while they are administering and considering the results of their self-assessment.

Nevertheless, self-assessment contains potential pitfalls. It is mostly believed that self-assessment is not reliable because it is carried out by learners who may not have little assessment experience. Hence, self-assessment needs to be carefully considered before being conducted. The reliability of self-assessment is influenced by factors such as sample size, age of subjects, cultural background, target language, format of tests, language skills being tested. Another problem of self-assessment is changing roles. Usually, assessments are expected to be a teacher's job by learners, teachers, administrators, and even the community. Undoubtedly, teachers may see self-assessment as a threat to their job because learners may not carry out what is assigned to them if they believe that self-assessment is a way of reducing the teacher's burden on them. On the other hand, learners may feel a lack of confidence in conducting their own assessment if they are not equipped with requisite skills.

With regard to issues relevant to the development of learner autonomy, Gardner and Miller (1999) mention the level of individualization achieved, the ways in which learner take responsibility for their own learning, the quantity and quality of learner reflection about their learning, the outcomes of learner reflection, and their degree of independence. The activities involving independent learning are: Analyzing needs, setting objectives, planning a program of work, choosing materials and activities, working unsupervised, and evaluating progress (Sheerin, 1997).

In general, there is a range of assessment tools to measure autonomous learning such as classroom observation, self-marked tests, progress cards, self-rating scales, logs/ diaries/journals, and so on. In this study, self-assessment tools (e.g., an

autonomous learning questionnaire, writing logs, and an end-of-course reflection) are carried out so that learners can self-assess their autonomous learning skills concerning self-management abilities, cognitive processes, learning content. Then they can self-report the development of their autonomous learning.

2.2 The Nature of Writing

Given that the present study is conducted in an EFL writing course, some issues including writing in EFL/ESL teaching, approaches to the teaching of writing, cognition and collaboration in EFL/ESL writing, and writing assessment should be addressed.

2.2.1 Writing in EFL/ESL Teaching

The notion of writing has significantly changed over time along with social development. As Lipson and Wixson (2009) state, writing was once regarded as a visual representation or a reflection of speech as it was assumed that whatever was spoken could also be written. In other words, writing was considered less important than speaking. However, Brookes and Grundy (1991) argue that this assumption is only true for a few activities such as dictation or transcription. In another respect, according to Reid (2001), writing meant doing grammar exercises, answering reading comprehension questions, and writing dictation in the 1970s. This means that writing was unlikely to be a distinctive skill in itself. From the 1980s on, however, EFL/ESL writing was no longer a reflection or a visual representation of speaking because of the fact that both speaking and writing have been recognized as important skills in education, business, personal communication (Weigle, 2002). In this sense, writing is understood as "a set of distinctive thinking processes which writers orchestrate or organize during the act of composing" (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 366). This definition

emphasizes not only the nature of writing as a cognitive process but also the role of writing in language education as a distinctive skill; therefore, it is used as an operational definition for this study.

As pointed out earlier, the role of writing has been underestimated for a long time; however, there has recently been a substantial increase in written communication in tandem with globalization and the rapid development of technology, i.e., the popularity of email, web forums, Internet messenger services, and text messaging. Hence, writing has become one of the most important issues in EFL/ESL teaching. In practice, there are several types of writing and different reasons for teaching writing. One of the most fundamental reasons is that "writing gives [learners] more 'thinking time' than they get when they attempt spontaneous conversation" (Harmer, 2007, p. 112). Undoubtedly, learners are provided with more opportunities to think about the language in writing than in speech. What is more, writing is associated with social roles that require the act of writing; for example, this skill may help one to record information, access professional opportunities that s/he seeks, check on learners' understanding of what has been taught in the form of written exams and so forth (Tribble, 1996). Another important reason for teaching writing is that writing is assumed to be one of the essential components in a language learning program because when one learns a second/foreign language, s/he learns how to communicate with others, i.e., how to understand them, talk to them, read what they write, and write to them (Raimes, 1983).

Notwithstanding the importance of writing in EFL/ESL language teaching, it is recognized that writing is a language skill that is difficult to acquire. As Saddler, et al. (2004) indicate, "[g]ood writing is not only hard work, it is an extremely complex and

challenging mental task" (p. 3). In fact, the act of composing involves complex thinking that requires the integration of such components as word choice, topics, organization, audience, purpose, clarity, sequence, cohesion, and transcription. In comparison with reading, which is also related to language expressed through visual medium, writing is more likely to be more difficult for learners to acquire because it is a complex skill involving multiple processes (e.g., cognitive linguistics and psycho-motor processes) that may cause some problems for learners. What is more, even though both writing and speaking are considered productive skills, writing is believed to be more difficult than speaking as it is characterized by well-formed sentences which are integrated into highly-structured paragraphs with dense packing of information, whereas spoken language packs in less dense information and less highly structured information as Brown and Yule (1989) demonstrate:

> Information may be packed densely in the written language, using heavily pre-modified noun phrases with accompanying post-modification, heavy adverbial modification and complex subordinating syntax. It is rare to find spoken language produced like this… (p. 7).

In summary, the teaching of EFL/ESL writing has received much attention due to its pedagogical and social roles; however, writing is not an easy skill for learners to acquire. That is why it is so important that approaches to the teaching of writing should be taken into great consideration.

2.2.2 Approaches to the Teaching of Writing

As a result of more attention being given to writing, a range of approaches supporting the teaching of writing has been developed. These approaches are assumed to be complementary and to have overlapping perspectives which help one to

understand the complex reality of writing (Hyland, 2003). In EFL/ESL writing teaching, teachers tend to adopt a range of methods that represents different perspectives with different foci (e.g., language structures, writing process, genre, etc.). The focus on language structures views writing as a product or a result of imitating available models. In this regard, a four-stage process is used for teaching writing, including familiarization (i.e., learners are provided with grammar and vocabulary), controlled writing (i.e., learners manipulate fixed patterns), guided writing (i.e., learners imitate model texts), and free writing (i.e., learners use patterns they have developed to write a paragraph, an essay, or a letter). Meanwhile, the focus on writing process sees writing as a process in which the writer plays a role as an independent producer of texts. There are several models of writing processes which are described in detail below. Beyond the focus on language structures or the writing process, there is also a focus on genre as a means of communication. This means that the approach primarily addresses the communicative purposes of the texts. In the literature, there are many studies discussing different approaches to the teaching of writing as a result of the increasing demand for students to be able to master the writing skill. A variety of approaches are commonly mentioned, such as product, process and genre approaches. In order to help readers to have a better understanding of these three approaches, a detailed description is presented below.

2.2.2.1 Product versus Process Approach

The product and process approaches used in writing instruction have different foci on writing production and a sense of responsibility, respectively. According to Brown (1994), teachers of writing were mostly in favor of the production of a final piece of writing before the 1990s. However, the process approach has

frequently replaced the more traditional product approach in EFL/ESL writing programs since the 1990s (Cohen, 1994). While the product approach focuses heavily on the final piece of writing, the process approach places an emphasis on how a piece of writing is produced over time. Furthermore, teachers are assumed to be responsible for all the hard work in the product approach whilst the learners sit back and only correct mistakes as suggested by the teacher (Mora-Flores, 2009). On the contrary, the process approach lays stress on the creativity of writing and the role of the writer as an independent producer of texts (e.g., Curry & Hewings, 2003; Tribble, 1996). This means that the focus of the process approach is on writers having to take responsibility for their writing.

In respect of writing instruction procedures, Mora-Flores (2009) presents some simple steps for the product approach. A learner first writes a draft with given prompts. The teacher then revises and edits the draft. Finally, the learner changes what the teacher has corrected and resubmits the final draft. By contrast, "[t]here is no agreed list of steps for the writing process among researchers and even less agreement about exactly what the writing curriculum should consist of" (Brookes & Grundy, 1991, p. 9). This is due to the fact that the process approach consists of different stages which can happen in various orders at different points. The process approach can be categorized into two main processes, namely the prewriting processes consisting of planning, targeting, and organizing and the in-writing processes involving drafting, evaluating, editing, and rewriting. Tribble (1996), however, provides a model of the writing process with five stages of prewriting, composing or drafting, revising, editing, and publishing as shown in Figure 2.3.
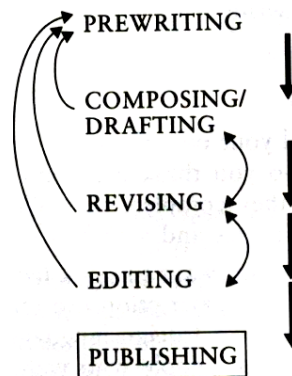
Figure 2.3 The writing process (Tribble, 1996, p. 39)

From another point of view, Curry and Hewings (2003) describe the writing process with seven major stages of prewriting, planning, drafting, reflecting, peer reviewing, revising, editing, and proofreading (see Figure 2.4). The present study relies predominantly on this model because it provides clearly-stated and systematic stages that learners can follow by themselves. In particular, in the stage of reflecting, learners have good opportunities to self-assess their written work.

generating ideas,
understanding the ideas of
others, collecting
information: note-taking,
freewriting, brainstorming,
looping

organising and
focusing ideas:
mind mapping,
clustering, listing,
outline

writing initial drafts of
a text focusing mainly
on the development,
organisation, and
elaboration of ideas

prewriting

planning

drafting

letting work sit,
coming back to
it at a later point

reflection

additional research
or idea generation

peer/tutor
review

feedback
from others

editing and
proofreading

revision

focusing attention
on the surface-level
features of the text

further developing
and clarifying
ideas, the structure
of the text

Figure 2.4 The writing process approach (Curry & Hewings, 2003, p. 34)

- Prewriting

This stage aims at finding ideas, collecting information, and organizing writers'

thoughts. Of the prewriting strategies, brainstorming and freewriting are regarded as

the two major components. In brainstorming, multiple ideas on a topic are generated

after a discussion or a reading regardless of their suitability for development. In

freewriting, learners are encouraged to generate ideas relevant to a particular topic

spontaneously in a certain allotted time.

- Planning

This stage emphasizes the organization of ideas through the techniques of mind mapping, clustering, listing, and making an outline for a written product. Planning plays a role as a framework for generating drafts.

- Drafting

In the process approach, writing is seen as an iterative process; hence, learners should be provided with opportunities to revise a piece of work based on feedback from peer reviewers or teachers. In the first draft, the development of the meaning and the use of ideas collected from prewriting strategies should be focused on more than linguistic accuracy. The next drafts are produced following reviews by peers or teachers.

- Reflecting

Reflecting means "letting a piece of writing sit before coming back to it with a fresh pair of eyes, and perhaps with feedback from peers or the lecturer" (ibid., p. 41). Reflecting actually gives learners a good opportunity to see the gaps in the structure of their writing, and to use the information provided by feedback from peers or teachers.

- Peer/tutor reviewing

Feedback on learners' drafts may be given by peers or teachers. Normally, feedback from teachers is appreciated more highly than that by peers since it is assumed that teachers are experts on the topic and the students might feel that they are not competent enough to offer useful advice to each other. However, Curry and Hewings (2003) argue that feedback by teachers apparently hinders a learner's intellectual development. This means that learners seem to follow teachers' suggestions or directives even when they disagree or do not understand them. By contrast, training and

practice using peer reviews can help learners to develop critical thinking and understand how readers respond to their writing.

- Revising

After getting feedback from peers or teachers, learners continue to revise their drafts. This means that they have to organize and refine their ideas. Mora-Flores (2009, p. 5) provides a more detailed list of what to do in this stage:

- ✓ Revisiting ideas for purpose, clarity, and effectiveness; adding information (e.g., details, examples of dialogues, facts);
- ✓ Adding descriptors (e.g., adjectives, adverbs, prepositional phrases);
- ✓ Adding sensory details; deleting repetition of ideas, words, phrases;
- ✓ Substituting words (adjectives, repetitive function words, adverbs, pronouns, proper nouns, synonyms);
- ✓ Rearranging ideas with a focus on clarity and discourse (sequence, order of ideas, order of sentences, order of paragraphs);
- ✓ Adding an introduction, subheadings, closings/ conclusion;
- ✓ Adding the language of genres (e.g., transition words, cue words, forms of language).

It is worth noting that when revising a draft completed by a peer, the writer should take a look back at the stages of reflecting and drafting.

- Editing and proofreading

The last stage of the writing process consists of editing, proofreading, polishing a text. Learners need to consider such mechanics of writing as formatting, references and footnotes, and features of linguistic accuracy. To do so, learners can review each other's work in pairs or on their own by using computer spelling check programs or

dictionaries. Mora-Flores (2009) recommends that editing should include spelling, grammar, mechanics, verb tenses, and sentence structures.

2.2.2.2 Genre Approach

The question 'what is a genre?' has attracted attention from many researchers. As a result, a number of definitions of genre have been given. On the one hand, Swales (1990) defines, "a genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes" (p. 58). This definition refers to conventions related to writers' purposes as well as communicative purposes. For example, a personal letter tells us about a writer's story with the aim to maintain a relationship. On the other hand, Mora-Flores (2009) defines a genre as a kind of literary work in a particular form or using a particular technique. This definition relates genre to a form or technique of a literary work rather than communicative purposes. It is noteworthy that both forms and communication functions, for example, a letter, an essay, or a laboratory report are included in Weigle's (2002) definition of a genre.

Tribble (1996) claims that the process approach has brought several benefits to teachers and learners; however, one of the significant drawbacks of this approach is failing to meet the needs of all types of learners. For example, the process approach can help learners to generate pieces of writing, yet learners may not be aware of what readers expect. Meanwhile, a genre approach which focuses on readers introduces a way in which language is used in different respects. This means that a learner has to produce a piece of writing for readers who may be unknown to him/her or who possess specific expectations of a text. Writing generally serves as a social activity in which texts are written with particular purposes and, as a result, Swales

(1990) asserts that communication will not definitely be successful if a reader cannot recognize the purpose of a text.

In conclusion, the above-mentioned approaches to the teaching of writing can be used flexibly in a language classroom depending on the objectives of a course. Of the three approaches, the process approach is employed in this study as a basic tenet as the aim of this study is to examine whether learners' autonomous learning and writing abilities can be developed over time in a portfolio-based writing course.

2.2.3 Cognition and Collaboration in EFL/ESL Writing

Given that writing is defined as a thinking process whereby a writer's thinking, ideas, and experiences are interpreted into written form (Mora-Flores, 2009), this section places an emphasis on the theoretical framework for an understanding of the thinking or cognitive process. Additionally, collaborative learning is considered essential in this study since it is considered to be associated with EFL/ESL writing.

2.2.3.1 Cognition in EFL/ESL Writing

In order to get a better understanding of cognition in relation to EFL/ESL writing, it is essential to provide some information about cognitive process models, namely Flower and Hayes' (1981) writing model and Hayes' (1996) revised writing model.

Flower and Hayes (1981) introduce a theory of cognitive process which involves "composing in an effort to lay groundwork for a more detailed study of the thinking process in writing" (p. 366). For some researchers, the writing model is divided into stages, which are characterized by the gradual development of a written product and the composition process is seen as a series of linear stages. For example, Rohman's (1965) model includes three stages: Pre-write, write, and re-write, whereas Britton et

al.'s (1975) model consists of the stages of conception, incubation and production. Both models share the same idea which is that these stages happen in turn in the composing process. However, it is commonly believed that writers are constantly planning and revising when they are writing. Hence, Flower and Hayes (1981) provide a process model involving mental processes (e.g., generating ideas, organizing ideas, etc.) as they argue that the stage model only reflects the growth of the written product, not the inner process of a writer who creates the written product.

In order to model the writing process, Flower and Hayes (1981) make use of verbal protocol analysis (think-aloud) in lieu of introspective analysis as other researchers have done. This is because the think-aloud protocols can "capture a detailed record of what is going on in the writer's mind during the act of composing itself" (p. 368). The model is eventually generated with three major elements: (1) the task environment, (2) the writer's long-term memory, and (3) the writing process. The first element includes topic, audience, exigency, and the text produced so far which refers to all things outside of a writer that may influence writing performance. The second element concerns knowledge of the topic, the audience, and writing plans. The third element reflects the basic writing processes of planning, translating, and reviewing, which are controlled by a monitor who serves as a writing strategist determining when the writer moves from one process to another. The planning process contains three sub-processes, namely generating ideas, organizing, and goal-setting. The main function of generating ideas is to retrieve relevant information from long-term memory, whereas the sub-process of organizing gives a meaningful structure to the writer's ideas. The process of organizing is associated with goal-setting which is one of the three major aspects of the planning process, which means that the writer organizes ideas on the

basis of writing goals created by the writer. The translating process involves the process of interpreting visible language in words because the information generated in the planning process can be represented by symbol systems (e.g., imagery or kinetic sensations) other than language. Thus, the representation of knowledge may be included in key words or organized in a visual or perceptual code such as a fleeting image and the writer needs to translate or capture these representations in words. The reviewing process concerns two sub-processes: Evaluating and revising. This process is a conscious process during which the writer chooses to read a written text "either as a springboard to further translating or with an eye to systematically evaluating and/or revising the text" (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 374).

Flower and Hayes (1981) endeavor to define the processes and knowledge necessary for the writing performance, nonetheless, it is unlikely to be a complete model. Therefore, Hayes (1996) proposes a new model (see Figure 2.5) to complete the Flower and Hayes' model since the it contains well-developed parts, including revision, planning, and text production. More importantly, the new model addresses new parts (e.g., social environment, the composing medium, phonological memory, genre knowledge, etc.) which Flower and Hayes (1981) did not account for.

THE TASK ENVIRONMENT

The Social Environment
- The audience
- Collaborators

The Physical Environment
- The text so far
- The composing medium

THE INDIVIDUAL

Motivation/Affect
- Goals
- Predispositions
- Beliefs and attitudes
- Cost/benefit estimates

Working Memory
- Phonological Memory
- Visual/spatial sketchpad
- Semantic memory

Cognitive Processes
- Text interpretation
- Reflection
- Text production

Long-term Memory
- Task schemas
- Topic knowledge
- Audience knowledge
- Linguistic knowledge
- Genre knowledge

Figure 2.5 The revised writing model (Hayes, 1996, p. 4)

The new model has two major components: The task environment and the individual. The task environment is composed of two sub-components: (1) the social environment including the audience and collaborators and (2) the physical environment including the texts the writer has produced so far and the writing medium (e.g., a word processor). Meanwhile, the individual includes motivation and affect, cognitive process, long-term memory, and working memory. First, motivation and affect consist of four parts: Goals (i.e., short-term communicative goals for the act of composing),

predispositions (i.e., long-term preferences or tendencies to engage in writing activities), the writer's beliefs and attitudes, cost/benefit estimates (i.e., estimates regarding the cost and benefits of spending time and money on writing). Second, the cognitive process has three parts: Text interpretation, reflection, and text production. The function of text interpretation is to create internal representations from linguistic and graphic inputs through reading, listening, and scanning graphics. The function of reflection is to process internal representations to create other internal representations through problem solving, decision making, and inferencing activities. The function of text production is to take internal representations in the task environment to produce written, spoken or graphic output. Third, long-term memory addresses different types of knowledge, namely text schemas (i.e., outlines that guide and control the production of texts), topic knowledge (i.e., content of texts), audience knowledge (i.e., the writer tries to anticipate readers' expectations or needs), linguistic knowledge (e.g., vocabulary, grammar, etc.), and genre knowledge (e.g., essays, novels, journals, advertisements, etc.). Last but not least, working memory is seen as a new component in this model as Hayes (1996) points out that the model proposed in 1981 paid relatively little attention to working memory. This new model includes phonological memory, visual/spatial sketchpad, and semantic memory, while phonological memory which stores phonologically coded information (or verbal material) and a visual/spatial sketchpad which stores visually or spatially coded information (or visual or spatial material) are identified as the main representations of working memory (e.g, Galbraith, 2009; Hayes, 1996). Semantic memory is added as another representation of working memory as it is useful for the description of text production.

In short, some significant differences can be identified between Flower and Hayes (1981) model and Hayes (1996) revised writing model. The first difference concerns the presence of working memory. Working memory plays is a fundamental component in the latter with the inclusion of visual/spatial and linguistic representations, whereas it is almost absent from the former. The second difference is that the latter puts a great emphasis on motivation and affect which were not given much attention in the former. The biggest difference is related to the reformulation of the parts in the cognitive process. When compared to the former, the latter appears to include more general terms, such as text production, text interpretation, and reflection instead of planning, translating, and reviewing respectively.

2.2.3.2 Collaborative Learning

Concerning the relationship between collaborative learning and L2 writing, Hamp-Lyons and Condon (2000) point out that, "writing and knowledge develop among individuals" (p. 44). In other words, interaction among peers is emphasized in L2 writing. Actually, collaborative learning occurs when learners are encouraged to work together rather than with the teacher to carry out a task and when they demonstrate what they share with each other and respect in each other's language input (Macaro, 1997). In addition, collaborative learning provides opportunities for learners to share responsibility for their learning and to learn from each other; thus, collaborative learning classes tend to be learner-centered. In an ESL writing classroom, opportunities for collaborative learning consist of group work for producing ideas, collecting and organizing learning materials, peer review and assessment by an authentic audience (Reid, 1993). As a result, learner independence and a sense of

responsibility for their learning can also be promoted through such group work activities.

In brief, the act of writing in this study concerns both the cognitive process and collaborative learning. The cognitive process refers to the thinking process that occurs when writers organize and produce their written work, whereas collaborative learning in L2 writing focuses on the interaction between learners through group work activities and/or peer review.

2.2.4 Writing Assessment

Assessment refers to "the variety of ways of collecting information on a learner's language ability or achievement" (Brindley, 2001, p. 137). Writing assessment, thus, involves self-assessment, peer assessment, and teacher assessment that consist of a series of ways to assess learners' writing performance. In order to conduct these assessments, it is essential to address approaches to scoring. Hence, detailed descriptions of these types of assessment and types of scoring will be provided as follows.

2.2.4.1 Types of Assessment

The first type of writing assessment is self-assessment that enables learners to reflect on what and how much they have learned. Self-assessment can be encouraged through four methods: Dialogue journals, learning logs, self-assessment of interests and writing awareness, and checklists of writing skills (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996).

Firstly, dialogue journals refer to entries that learners regularly write to a teacher on a topic they choose. The topics can be about a book learners like, their interests or hobbies, their attitudes toward learning, or content areas. Learners can make

the entries in five to ten minutes at the end of a class period or at any convenient time during the day. The teacher replies to learners' entries using appropriate language use, but not correcting their language. The journals can be recorded in a notebook or on a compact disk. One of the noticeable advantages of dialogue journals is to provide learners with opportunities to see the development of their writing ability.

Secondly, learning logs are another type of self-assessment in writing. Like dialogue journals, the teacher should write comments in a learning log to encourage writing and provide appropriate language structures rather than correct learners' language use. Instead of making entries on a favorite topic as in dialogue journals, learners are encouraged to make entries in the log addressing the following questions in the last five minutes of each class meeting:

- What did I learn today?

- What strategies or approaches worked best for me in learning?

- What was hard to understand?

- What will I do to understand better?

(O'Malley & Pierce, 1996, p. 153)

It is seen that a learning log is a useful tool for shy learners who are afraid of proposing questions in class since they feel free to jot their ideas down in a learning log instead. The teacher can review learners' learning logs once in a while or review some learners' logs during class time to capture learners' learning needs. When the teacher reviews the logs, s/he can ask himself/herself the questions like 'Does the student define and/or use new vocabulary from the lesson?', 'Does the student use content vocabulary appropriately?', 'Does the student identify a range of strategies that work in his/her learning?' and so on.

Thirdly, the employment of surveys or rating scales of interest and awareness are used to determine learner attitudes toward writing abilities. Learners can be asked about their attitudes or perceptions about their improvement in writing. They can complete such a survey of writing interests and awareness when they have enough command of English to answer the questions in the survey.

Finally, writing a checklist is one way to help learners with self-assessment which is "a key element in process writing as learners review, edit, and revise their own work" (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996, p. 153). The checklist for self-assessment is created according to the predetermined criteria in the scoring rubrics. The teacher can modify a writing checklist by choosing parts appropriate for learners' English proficiency and the purposes of a writing program.

The employment of self-assessment provides language learners with several benefits. For example, it can encourage learner involvement and responsibility. Self-assessment gives learners the right to evaluate their writing as assessors. It also helps to increase their judgment skills and see their development in terms of writing ability. Furthermore, it offers learners' personalized feedback to the teacher. Nonetheless, learners may feel ill-equipped to conduct the assessment on their own.

The second type of writing assessment is peer assessment which is recognized as "an effective means for having English language learners practice academic language with each other that is grounded in standards and tied to a lesson's or unit's activities" (Gottlieb, 2006, p. 145). In writing, it can be said that peer assessment is the evaluation of each other's writing among learners. In order to support peer assessment in writing, the teacher should give learners a regular form of peer evaluation and editing and then evaluate papers selectively in order to perceive each

learner's progress. While reviewing the work of others based on the given standards, each learner will answer the questions as follows:

- What did you like about the paper?

- What facts or ideas could be added to the paper?

- What changes could be made to improve the paper?

(O'Malley & Pierce, 1996, p. 156)

After completing the peer evaluation and editing form, learners are encouraged to exchange papers and rate them by using the scoring rubric. Then, learners should be provided opportunities to edit and revise their writing. One of the most significant advantages of peer assessment is that learners can learn how to write through the evaluation of their peers' written work. However, it should be recognized that learners sometimes hesitate to share all their impressions with their peers during peer assessment because they are afraid of hurting other people's feelings.

Apart from self-assessment and peer assessment, teacher assessment is considered an essential type of writing assessment. Curry and Hewings (2003) acknowledge that learners tend to believe in assessment or feedback made by the teacher rather than that made by their peers or themselves. In practice, some complicated errors cannot be corrected by learners. Therefore, self-assessment and peer assessment of learners' written products should necessarily be accompanied by teacher assessment or feedback. In order to conduct teacher assessment, such useful tools as an anecdotal record which is a type of document used by the teacher for observing learners' performance, checklists of learner performance, and rating scales can be employed (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). While an anecdotal record and checklists of learner

performance are a part of the teacher's journal, rating scales are also used by the teacher in the process of evaluating learners' written papers.

In short, each type of assessment has its own advantages and disadvantages. While self-assessment and peer assessment can help learners to take more responsibility for their learning, teacher assessment can give learners more confidence in making their corrections or revisions. Therefore, self-assessment (e.g., learner journals and checklists of writing performance), peer assessment and teacher assessment are all used for writing assessment in this study.

2.2.4.2 Scoring Schemes

With the aim of providing appropriate writing assessment, the objectives of the writing tasks need to be predetermined, i.e., the assessment is designed based on what outcomes are valued. Written work can be evaluated by such scales as primary trait scoring, holistic scoring, and analytic scoring. In EFL/ESL writing assessment, however, primary trait scoring that involves assessing compositions associated with specific purposes and audiences has not been frequently used. On the other hand, holistic scoring and analytic scoring have been commonly used in writing assessment (e.g., Lipson & Wixson, 2009; Weigle, 2002).

Holistic scoring is seen as the evaluation of a composition as a whole piece of writing, i.e., a learner's writing piece can be compared with those in a set of compositions or with those of other learners. The emphasis of holistic scoring system is on the total quality of a written text rather than the sum of its components (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). As for holistic scoring, a scale is used to guide the evaluation of learners' products as described in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 TOEFL Writing Scoring Guide

6	An essay at this level

- effectively addresses the writing task
- is well organized and well developed
- uses clearly appropriate details to support a thesis or illustrate ideas
- displays consistent facility in use of language
- demonstrates syntactic variety and appropriate word choice though it may have occasional errors

5   An essay at this level

- may address some parts of the task more effectively than others
- is generally well organized and developed
- uses details facility in the use of language
- displays facility in the use of language
- demonstrates some syntactic variety and range of vocabulary, though it will probably have occasional errors

4   An essay at this level

- addresses the writing topic adequately but may slight parts of the task
- is adequately organized and developed
- uses some details to support a thesis or illustrate an idea
- demonstrates adequate but possibly inconsistent facility with syntax and usage
- may contain some errors that occasionally obscure meaning

3   An essay at this level may reveal one or more of the following weaknesses:

- inadequate organization or development
- inappropriate or insufficient details to support or illustrate generalizations
- a noticeably inappropriate choice of words or word forms
- an accumulation of errors in sentence structure and/or usage

2   An essay at this level is seriously flawed by one or more of the following weaknesses:

- serious disorganization or underdevelopment
- little or no detail, or irrelevant specifics
- serious and frequent errors in sentence structure or usage
- serious problems with focus

1   An essay at this level

- may be incoherent
- may be undeveloped
- may contain severe and persistent writing errors

0   A paper is rated 0 if it contains no response, merely copies the topic, is off-topic, is written in a foreign language, or consists of only keystroke characters.

<p align="right">(Weigle, 2002, p.113)</p>

Unlike holistic scoring, analytic scoring is used to analyze component parts of writing separately. There is a range of analytic scoring rubrics for writing with different names of components in several studies, but they refer to quite similar components. For example, while O'Malley and Pierce (1996) propose an analytic scoring rubric for writing including composing (ideas), style (vocabulary and voice), sentence formation (word order), usage (language use), mechanics, Jacobs et al. (1981, as cited in Weigle, 2002) create a detailed scoring file to assess a written product on the basis of the following criteria, namely, content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics (see Table 2.3).

Table 2.3 Scoring File

		ESL composition profile	
Student Score	**Level**	**Date** **Topic** **Criteria**	**Comments**
Content	30-27	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: knowledgeable – substantive – thorough – development of thesis – relevant to assigned topic	
	26-22	GOOD TO AVERAGE: some knowledge of subject – adequate range – limited development of thesis – mostly relevant to topic, but lacks detail	
	21-17	FAIR TO POOR: limited knowledge of subject – little substance – inadequate development of topic	
	16-13	VERY POOR: does not show knowledge of subject – non-substantive – not pertinent – OR not enough to evaluate	
Organization	20-18	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: fluent expression – ideas clearly stated/supported – succinct – well-organized – logical sequencing – cohesive	
	17-14	GOOD TO AVERAGE: somewhat choppy – loosely organized but main ideas stand out – limited support – logical but incomplete sequencing	
	13-10	FAIR TO POOR: non-fluent – ideas confused or disconnected – lacks logical sequencing and development	
	9-7	VERY POOR: does not communicate – no organization – OR not enough to evaluate	
Vocabulary	20-18	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: sophisticated range – effective word/idiom choice and usage – word form mastery – appropriate register	

Table 2.3 Scoring File (Cont.)

Student Score	Level	ESL composition profile Criteria	Comments
		Date Topic	
	17-14	GOOD TO AVERAGE: adequate range – occasional errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage *but meaning not obscured*	
	13-10	FAIR TO POOR: limited range – frequent errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage – *meaning confused or obscured*	
	9-7	VERY POOR: essentially translation – little knowledge of English vocabulary, idioms, word form – OR not enough to evaluate	
Language Use	25-22	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: effective complex constructions – few errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions	
	21-18	GOOD TO AVERAGE: effective but simple constructions – minor problems in complex constructions – several errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions *but meaning seldom obscured*	
	17-11	FAIR TO POOR: major problems in simple/complex constructions – frequent errors of negation, agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions and/or fragments, run-ons, deletion – *meaning confused or obscured*	
	10-5	VERY POOR: virtually no mastery of sentence construction rules – dominated by errors – does not communicate – OR not enough to evaluate	
Mechanics	5	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: demonstrates mastery of conventions – few errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing	
	4	GOOD TO AVERAGE: occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing *but meaning not obscured*	
	3	FAIR TO POOR: frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing – poor handwriting – *meaning confused or obscured*	
	2	VERY POOR: no mastery of conventions – dominated by errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing – handwriting illegible – OR not enough to evaluate	
Total Score		Reader Comments	

(Weigle, 2002, p. 116)

In short, although holistic scoring and analytic scoring can provide rich information about learners' writing abilities, these scoring approaches do not reflect

and evaluate learners' writing processes which need to be observed and captured over time (Lipson & Wixson, 2009). That is why portfolio assessment should be carried out.

2.3 Portfolios

A portfolio is generally employed as a learning tool, an assessment tool, a professional development tool, etc. For the purpose of this study, portfolios are seen as a learning and assessment tool which helps to show the development of learner autonomy and writing competence. Thus, a brief review of definition of portfolios and portfolio assessment is necessary.

2.3.1 Definition of Portfolios

It is recognized that there have been diverse types of portfolios that can be used in various contexts around the world (e.g., Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). On the one hand, there have been a few definitions of portfolios in education literature in general and language teaching and learning in particular. Paulson, Paulson, and Meyer (1991) state that a portfolio is viewed as "a purposeful collection of learner work that exhibits the learner's efforts, progress, and achievements in one or more areas" (p. 60). Along similar lines, portfolios are viewed as collections of work that are organized or structured for the representation of one's learning, skills, and accomplishments (Jones & Shelton, 2011).

On the other hand, O'Malley and Pierce (1996) describe essential elements of portfolios in lieu of the provision of a definition since they argue that there is no specific definition of portfolios appropriate for every context. The key elements in a portfolio which include samples of learner work, learner self-assessment, and clearly stated criteria should be discussed. The first element involves 'learner work samples'. It is

known that most of the portfolios contain samples of learner work showing the development of a learner's ability over time. The samples can be writing samples, audio or videotapes, mathematics problems, social studies reports, or science experiments. As noted earlier, portfolios may vary from one context to another, yet they all are used as systematic collections of a learner's work. Therefore, systematic collection needs to be planned as carefully as instructional goals, materials, and activities. This means that a teacher and learners need to determine not only the process that helps to evaluate learners' progress but also the system by which all information is collected and shared with learners and their parents, other teachers, and administrators. The second element concerns 'learner self-assessment'. A portfolio is not simply an assessment tool of learner work conducted by a teacher, but rather a self-assessment tool whereby learners can monitor their own progress and take responsibility for their learning to achieve their predetermined goals. The three kinds of self-assessment employed in a portfolio are documentation, comparison, and integration. In documentation, learners are asked to give a justification for the selected items in the portfolio. In comparison, the current piece of writing is compared with previous pieces of work in terms of improvements. In integration, the use of the portfolio is to provide examples of a student's writing development or their independence as a learner. The third element is 'clearly stated criteria'. Learners need to know how and by what criteria their work will be evaluated. Hence, learners should get involved in discussing both the criteria and in goal setting. In portfolio assessment, criteria can be established for the selection of pieces of writing in the portfolio and for the judgment of their work.

Furthermore, Hamp-Lyons and Condon (2000) introduce the nine following elements of portfolios, of which four elements: Collection, reflection and self-

assessment, selection, and delayed evaluation are considered relevant to the development of learner autonomy or learner-centred control in a course.

(1) A portfolio is a *collection* of more than one writing piece.

(2) It enables the writer to display a *range* of the written works according to genres, purposes, and audiences.

(3) It has *context richness* as it reflects the learning context which determines the contents of the portfolio and demonstrates what the writer has accomplished within that context.

(4) A method that teachers and learners find useful is *delayed evaluation* as it provides the writer with opportunities to revise the written work before the final evaluation is given.

(5) It involves selecting writing pieces. *Selection* gives the writer a chance to choose the optimal pieces to submit for judgment. This means that the writer has control over his/ her learning. Thus, selection can promote self-assessment.

(6) The characteristics of collection, range, and context richness are usually under the teacher's control, yet delayed evaluation and selection offer opportunities for *student-centered control* that can be exercised when learners can choose the best writing piece that meet the evaluation criteria and revise them before putting them into the portfolio.

(7) One of the most important characteristics of a portfolio is *reflection and self-assessment*. The writer reflects on their own work and is usually required to produce reflective writing about their writing process and development and how the portfolio represents that development.

(8) It provides a means for measuring *growth along specific parameters* such as linguistics, or organizational skills, or development of arguments.

(9) It also provides a means for measuring *development over time***.** Learners can exhibit and emphasize their development in a way that the teacher may not anticipate or specify.

As far as types of portfolios are concerned, Bullock and Hawk (2005) present three types of portfolios: Process, product, and showcase, each with different purposes of development. Firstly, a process portfolio shows a person's process in producing his/her work in a given area over a period of time (e.g., Bullock & Hawk, 2005; Olson, 2003). For example, in an EFL writing course, the main purpose of a process portfolio is to show the progress of learners' writing over time with the use of a new approach. Particularly, learners collect work samples, commonly called evidence, which represents their writing skills and they put them into a portfolio. More importantly, reflection on their own progress (both strengths and weaknesses) is based on the evidence included in the portfolio .

Secondly, a product portfolio is a set of evidence developed over a short period of time to meet a desired outcome. A product portfolio contains very similar pieces of evidence, and reflections focus on the strengths of the required evidence. For example, learners are required to create a portfolio to show the implementation of the 'writing process' in a classroom. The learners' portfolios present similar evidence including written work demonstrating each step of the writing process and an editor's checklists. Also, reflections probably consist of how the writing process is implemented in the classroom, what improvements should be necessary for implementing the writing process, and what changes should be made for the next lesson or unit. A product

portfolio is chosen in this case because the teacher wants to compare how the learners implement the writing process. Additionally, s/he can see the strengths and weaknesses of individual learners and the writing process as a whole.

Finally, a showcase portfolio, which is a collection of a person's best work, is chosen by the individual. The purpose of a showcase portfolio is to show an author's best work in one or more areas, and reflections emphasize the strengths of the evidence.

In summary, a portfolio which is seen as an organized collection of samples of a learner's work showing learning progress over time is developed and predominantly assessed by learners themselves through clearly predetermined criteria with the help of the teacher. A portfolio is characterized by nine elements: Collection, range, context richness, delayed evaluation, selection, student-centered control, reflection and self-assessment, growth along specific parameters, and development over time. Furthermore, three types of portfolios, namely a process portfolio, a product portfolio, and a showcase portfolio are introduced. For this study, a portfolio is created and developed using a combination of these various types.

2.3.2 Portfolio Assessment

In comparison with traditional approaches to language teaching, portfolios "permit instruction and assessment to be woven together" (Paulson, Paulson, & Meyer, 1991). This means that a portfolio is used as a learning and evaluation tool. The contents of a portfolio can vary according to a particular program of assessment and instruction, yet some items which should be included in a portfolio are a series of examples of their achievements or their work over time or pieces of writing at various stages of completion, written responses to reading, reading logs, selected daily work, classroom

tests, learner self-reflections, observational checklists, unit projects, and audio or video tapes (e.g., Jones & Shelton, 2011; Lipson & Wixson, 2009).

Weigle (2002) presents the positive impacts of portfolio assessment on learner autonomy as well as writing performance. Firstly, portfolios enable learners to develop reflection on and self-awareness of their own learning which may play an important role in life-long learning. Secondly, a sense of ownership of their writing is developed through control over the conditions and the contents for writing, which probably leads to autonomous learning as O'Malley and Pierce (1996) claim that "with portfolio assessment, learners become self-directed learners who monitor their own progress" (p. 54). Also, Murphy and Camp (1996, as cited in Weigle, 2002) indicate that the process of creating portfolios provides learners with the ability to assess their own work and make decisions about what should be put into a portfolio or what parts of the portfolio should be presented for judgment, the monitoring of their own progress, and setting their learning goals. Especially, portfolio assessment can help to develop the ability of self-assessment when learners are given opportunities to evaluate their own work. Thirdly, writing samples in a portfolio show the development of written language acquisition. This emphasizes that writing focuses not only on the product but also on the process. Finally, portfolio assessment provides learners with many opportunities for revision through delayed evaluation. Several scholars (e.g., Curry & Hewings, 2003; Hamp-Lyons & Condon, 2000; Weigle, 2002) believe that learners are willing to improve their weak points if they have a chance to look back on their writing. This allows learners to enhance their writing competence in a non-threatening learning environment.

In the current study, based on all pieces of writing developed over time (from the first draft, to the revised draft and to the final draft), an end-of-course reflective essay, reflective journals, editor's checklists, reflections on writing performance, and artifacts (e.g., photos, newspapers, advertisements, etc.), the researcher will be able to evaluate the ability to self-assess learners' writing tasks, the ability to choose learning materials supporting the writing tasks, the ability to reflect on learners' writing, the ability to work independently, the ability to develop a study plan, the ability to work cooperatively, and the ability to write essays of different types.

With reference to the teacher's and the learners' roles in portfolio assessment, O'Malley and Pierce (1996) demonstrate that self-assessment and peer assessment are referred to as the key parts to portfolios. This does not mean that the role of the teacher in portfolio assessment is underestimated. While learners produce and implement evaluation criteria, reflect on their learning, set goals, and organize samples of their work in their portfolios, the teacher serves as a guide and provides feedback for portfolio assessment. It is suggested that the teacher should evaluate writing samples by spot checking learners' self-assessment. This means that the teacher selects some samples in the learners' portfolios to evaluate, but does not need to go back over everything that the learners have already assessed. During the assessment, the teacher should give constructive and specific feedback on the strengths and weaknesses in a learner's work.

2.4 Instructional Design Models

The purpose of instruction is to help people to learn. It refers to a range of activities that the teacher uses to help learners to get involved in the learning process (Gagné, et al., 2005). Accordingly, instructional systems design (ISD) or instructional design is viewed as a systematic and reflective process of designing performance objectives, developing instructional strategies, choosing media or creating materials, and carrying out evaluation (e.g., Branch, 2009; Smith & Ragan, 1999).

Instructional design models are "visualized depictions of the instructional design process, emphasizing its elements and their relationships" (Smith & Ragan, 1999, p. 7). Most of the instructional design models have the same components, yet a specific number of procedures and graphic representations may be different. The following models provide good examples of instructional design models.

2.4.1 The ADDIE Model

The ADDIE model is regarded as the most basic model of the instructional design process (Gagné, et al., 2005) and a guiding framework for complex learning situations (Branch, 2009). Thus, it has been commonly used to develop education and training programs and it includes five phases of *analysis, design, development, implementation*, and *evaluation* with specific aims as described as follows.
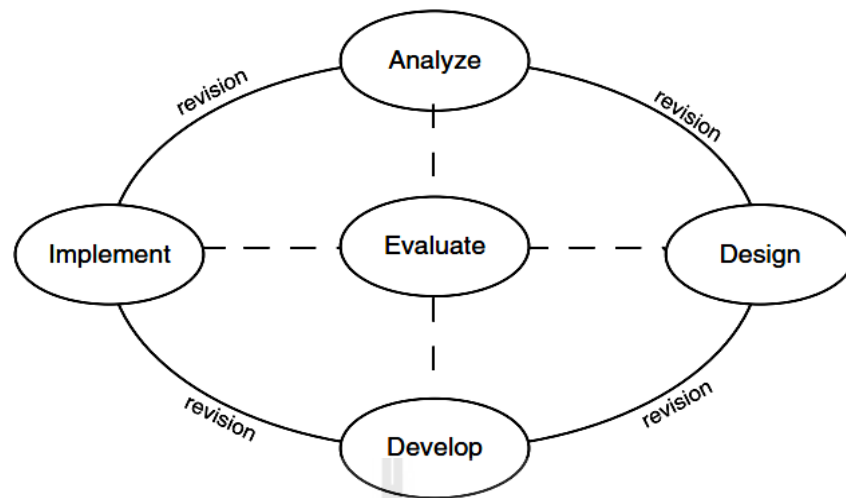
Figure 2.6 The ADDIE concept (Branch, 2009, p. 2)

The aim of the *analyze* phase is to describe the actual learning situations and identify potential causes for a performance gap to support decisions in the next stage. This phase is composed of the following procedures: (1) validating the performance gap, (2) determining instructional goals, (3) analyzing learners, (4) auditing available resources, (5) recommending potential delivery systems (including cost estimates), and (6) composing a project management plan.

The aim of the *design* phase is to verify the desired performances and appropriate testing methods. The main procedures of the *design* phase are conducting a task inventory, composing performance objectives, generating testing strategies, and calculating return on investment.

The aim of the *develop* phase is to generate and validate the learning resources. The main procedures often associated with the *develop* phase are as follows: (1) generating the content, (2) selecting supporting media that already exist or develop supporting media for the specific purpose of this project, (3) developing guidance for

the teacher, (4) developing guidance for the student, (5) conducting formative revisions, and (6) conducting a pilot test.

The aim of the *implement* phase is to prepare the learning environment and engage the students. Preparing the teacher and preparing the student are the two main procedures of the *implement* phase.

The aim of the *evaluate* phase is to assess the quality of the instructional products and processes before and after implementation. The main procedures of the *evaluate* phase are (1) determining the evaluation criteria for all aspects of the ADDIE process, (2) selecting or creating all of the evaluation tools that will be required to complete the entire ADDIE process, and (3) conducting an evaluation.

2.4.2 The Dick and Carey Systems Approach Model for Designing Instruction

The Dick and Carey systems approach model shown in Figure 2.7 is one of the most influential instructional design models. When compared to the ADDIE model, The Dick and Carey (2005) model also includes five core elements of analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation; however, it is likely to be more complicated as it has nine procedural steps.
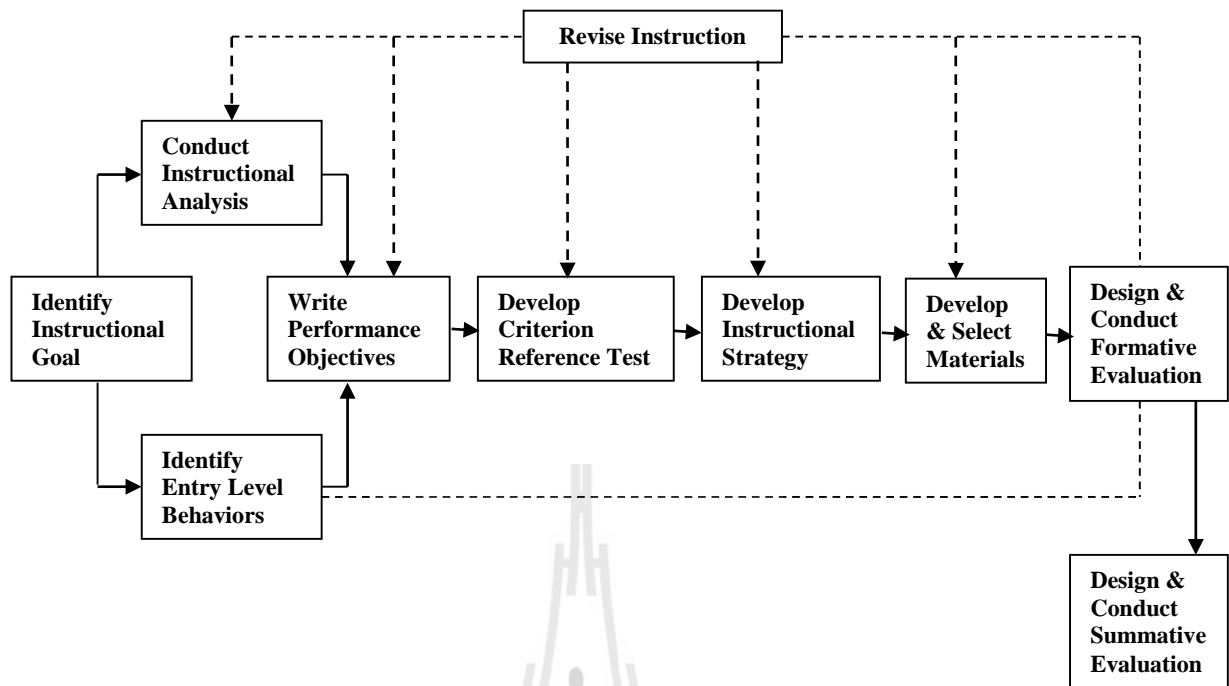
Figure 2.7 Dick and Carey systems approach model for designing instruction

(Dick, Carey, & Carey, 2005, p. 1)

The first step is *identifying instructional goal(s)* which determines what instructional designers want learners to achieve after the completion of the instruction.

The second step includes *conducting instructional analysis.* The key aim of instructional analysis is to determine skills, knowledge, and attitudes that should be included in the instruction.

The third step is *analyzing learners and contexts*. Besides instructional analysis, the designers should determine characteristics of learners, e.g., learners' current skills, preferences, and attitudes and contexts in which the instruction will be delivered.

The fourth step is *writing performance objectives*. On the basis of the instructional analysis and analysis of learners and contexts, specific statements of what learners are able to do after the instruction is completed. For example, statements which

are derived from skills identified in instructional analysis will determine skills to be learned and contexts or conditions under which the skills must be performed.

The fifth step is *developing assessment instruments*. The assessment instruments will be developed based on the conditions, behavior, and criteria included in the objectives identified earlier.

The sixth step is *developing instructional strategy*. The strategy used to achieve the terminal objective includes pre-instructional activities, presentation of content, learner participation, assessment, and follow-through activities. The designer should consider both learning theories and characteristics of the media whereby the instruction will be delivered.

The seventh step is *developing and selecting instructional materials* which contains guidance for learners, instructional materials (e.g., instructor's guides, students' modules, overhead transparencies, videotape, computer-based multimedia formats, and web pages for distance learning), and assessments. The development of original materials depends on the availability of relevant materials and the types of learning outcomes.

The next step is *developing and constructing formative evaluation of instruction*. The key purpose of this step is to help to evaluate the value of the instructional goals. Three types of formative evaluation of instruction are identified as one-to-one evaluation, small-group evaluation, and field-trial evaluation.

The last step of the design and development process is *revising instruction*. Data collected from the formative evaluation are used for revision of the instruction.

Even though *designing and conducting summative evaluation* is included in the model, it is not considered an integral part of the instructional design process as the

designer is not involved in this step. Instead, the designer is referred to as an independent evaluator.

In this study, the step of *designing and conducting summative evaluation* was adapted to construct the PLAD model because the teacher in this context should give feedback on learners' learning performance before a new learning cycle starts.

2.4.3 The ASSURE Model

Unlike the above-mentioned models, the focus of the ASSURE model is to plan and conduct instruction that incorporates media and technology (Smaldino, et al., 2005). ASSURE, an acronym of Analyze, Set, Select, Utilize, Require, and Evaluate, aims to assure effective instruction. In particular, this model contains six steps as illustrated in Figure 2.8. This model is included in this section because its steps are associated with learning activities that learners may carry out in this study.

1. *Analyze learners*: When analyzing learners, the designer or instructor should consider general characteristics (e.g., age, grade level, learning styles, job or position, cultural and socioeconomic factors), specific entry competencies (e.g., knowledge and skill, prerequisite skills, target skill and attitudes), and learning styles (spectrum of psychological traits, e.g., anxiety, aptitude, audio-visual preferences, motivation, etc.) although it is not feasible to analyze every trait of learners.

2. *State objectives*: The aim of the second step is to determine what learning outcome every learner is expected to achieve after the completion of the instruction.

3. *Select method, media, and materials*: The selection has three steps: (1) choosing an appropriate method for a given learning task; (2) choosing a

media format (e.g., flip chart, slides, audio, video, computer multimedia) which is appropriate for the method; and (3) choosing, modifying, and designing specific materials in that media format. For the last step, the instructor can select available materials, modify existing materials, or design new materials.

4. *Utilize media and materials*: When applying materials and media in a classroom, the instructor should preview the materials to ensure that they are appropriate for the audience and for its objectives. Next, the instructor needs to prepare the materials and media to support the activities that are planned. The instructor should make sure that wherever he/she is in a classroom, in a laboratory or in the field, all facilities are available for the learners to use the materials and media. In addition, the learners should be prepared for a lesson. This requires a proper warm-up activity, e.g., an introduction giving an overview of the content of a lesson or a rationale explaining how a new lesson is related to the old one. Finally, the instructor should provide learning experiences for their students. In a student-centered class, the instructor plays a role as a facilitator to help the students to explore new knowledge from different sources, to prepare for a portfolio, or to present information to their classmates.

5. *Require learners' participation*: The instructor/designer needs to find ways to keep learners participating in class activities since active participation in the learning process can enhance learning achievements.

6. *Evaluate and revise*: Evaluation and revision is an essential part of the instruction development. It is not the end of the instruction, rather it is a

starting point for the next stage and the continuing cycle of the model. The purposes of this step are to assess learner achievement and evaluate the methods and media employed throughout the instruction.

Figure 2.8 The ASSURE Model (Smaldino, et al., 2005, p. 49)

In brief, all the models which involve five phases of analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation are widely used in education and training programs. However, the procedural steps of the models vary to some extent in their focus. The differences enable these models to support each other, rather than keeping them isolated. For this study, ISD models serve as a guideline which helps the researcher to design the portfolio-based learner autonomy development model (see section 3.6.2).

2.5 Previous Studies

In order to give an overall picture of the concept of learner autonomy and approaches to promoting learner autonomy in EFL/ESL learning, twenty-seven previous studies are summarized with their major elements including focus of study, participants and setting, research design, data collection methods, data analysis, and findings. Accordingly, some lessons can be learned and applied in the current study and a research gap might also be identified.

For a clearer picture of approaches to the development of learner autonomy, seven out of twenty-seven previous studies are selected for more detailed summaries below since they refer to learning tools such as the Internet, learning portfolios, electronic portfolios (e-portfolios), the web 2.0 course management system, learning contracts, and online learning environments in different contexts.

Macià, et al. (2003) conducted a study on developing learner autonomy through a virtual EAP (English for Academic Purposes) course. The participants of the study were twenty-nine students from eight Catalan universities. The participants were required to jot down their views and attitudes on language and learning in the mailbox or the classroom forum. Thus, the data of the study were obtained through electronic documents and e-mail messages. The data were analyzed qualitatively by identifying and categorizing ideas related to learner autonomy. The findings indicated that the participants did not see the course as an end itself, but rather a process, i.e., they took opportunities to practice the language through exposure. Furthermore, the participants were aware of the idiosyncratic features of a virtual learning environment and acknowledged the benefits of the Internet as a language learning tool.

In addition, Büyükdumana and Şirina (2010) investigated the effects of a learning portfolio, a constructivist evaluation tool, on enhancing learner autonomy. This study was a kind of survey research with a five-point Likert questionnaire which consisted of fourteen questions. The questionnaire was delivered to sixty Turkish university students who were from four different upper-intermediate classes right after the instructional process ended. They knew about learning by means of a portfolio process and the rationale behind the learning portfolio since they had gone through the learning process three times prior to the study. The findings of the study showed the benefits of a learning portfolio, i.e., it helped learners to take on responsibility, do some research, be aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and it also gave them opportunities to learn at their own pace. This means that a learning portfolio can be used to assist the participants to become autonomous learners, although they still need a teachers' guidance.

Similarly, Chau and Cheng (2010) explored the use of portfolios for independent learning. However, they explored the use of another kind of portfolios, namely, e-portfolios. The participants consisted of sixty-three Chinese undergraduate students at Hong Kong Polytechnic University from twenty-one academic disciplines and thirteen English language teachers who served as cheerleaders. Data were collected via semi-structured interviews, documents in students' e-portfolios, and students' reflective entries. The data were qualitatively analyzed to identify the main topics. The findings reported that e-portfolios served as instruments for planning, monitoring and reflection of learning. Thus, students could identify goals and make choice of artifacts using technological skills appropriate for the task or they could modify their goals and/or adjust strategies for further improvement. However, there remained some

challenges concerning students, teachers, and institutions, e.g., the 'clone' phenomenon of student performance, teacher identity, and institutional policy.

In another study, Sanprasert (2010) carried out a study on course management at Kasetsart University, Thailand. The aim of the study was to find out changes in students' perceptions and in their autonomous learning practices when a course management system was integrated into an English course. A kind of mixed methods was employed in this study. An open-ended questionnaire and journals were employed as the data collection tools. The questionnaire was delivered to fifty-seven Thai students in either the experimental group or the control group at the beginning and at the end of the course. Furthermore, the participants were required to write weekly journals. The participants in the experimental group wrote their opinions and comments on the M@xLearn system which was developed by the Faculty of Engineering, Kasetsart University, Bangkok, Thailand. The teacher-researcher and the students classmates were able to access each other's journals. By contrast, the participants in the control group wrote their journals on paper and only the teacher could read and give feedback. The content of the journals was about the process of learning, questions, reflections, suggestions or even complaints. The study discovered that the system offered environment and structures to encourage the participants to take control of their learning. They also developed reactive autonomy, learned to work collaboratively, and organized their resources autonomously under the teacher's direction.

Recently, Ismail and Yusof (2012) focused on promoting learner autonomy through a learning contract which was referred to as a formal, written agreement between the teacher and students about what to learn and how to measure their learning. It could be a diary, a log, a journal, or a reflective tool. Both qualitative and quantitative

approaches were employed in this paper. The qualitative data were collected through the learner contracts, the transcripts of the conference, and the interviews were coded into significant categories for the content analysis. Meanwhile, the quantitative data obtained via the questionnaire were tabulated and presented in percentages and frequencies. The participants were 141 ESL Malay university freshmen taking an English language proficiency course. They were guided how to plan their own learning contracts. At the end of the course, they submitted their contracts to the researcher. Only twenty-two out of 141 students took part in the learner conferences and interviews. The results showed the potential of using learning contracts for language learning through students' positive experiences in carrying out learning contract activities, which may lead to the promotion of learner autonomy.

In the context of language learning in Vietnam, Dang (2012) conducted a study with 562 Vietnamese undergraduate students from four universities across Vietnam to investigate the students' perceptions of learner autonomy and their performance in online and offline learning environments. The quantitative and qualitative data were obtained by a survey questionnaire, log records, and a semi-structured interview. The results demonstrated that students probably viewed learning as a product itself with ultimate scores rather than a process of their learning experiences. In addition, the author explored the socio-cultural factors that might shape learner autonomy, and the factors influencing students' autonomous learning, such as their technological competence, learning attitudes, and goal orientation. Even though this study was carried out with a large sample and an elaborate research design, there were some drawbacks. For example, the researcher did not take part in the study as a participant. Instead, three teachers of English were invited to be in charge of Listening-Speaking courses with

five classes; however, none of the teachers had used an online learning environment before this investigation. Clearly this affects the reliability and validity of the study to some extent.

More recently, a theoretical study conducted by Lam (2013) addressed the promotion of self-regulated learning (SRL) through portfolio assessment (PA) in EFL writing classrooms with the focus on developing a conceptual model of SRL through PA. This model was constructed on the basis of Butler and Winne's (1995) conceptual model involving a feedback process and the principles of PA. The model consisting of nine steps showed the relationship between PA, SRL, and feedback. In the first step, portfolio tasks are first introduced to learners in an academic writing course. In the second step, learners endeavor to equip themselves with text and strategy knowledge and willingness (i.e., confidence, motivation, beliefs, etc.) to take the course. In the third step, learners set learning goals. In the fourth step, learners choose writing strategies to perform different portfolio tasks. For the fifth step, learners self-assess their writing to see whether or not their writing performance and composing strategies reach the predetermined goals. In the sixth step, learners self-monitor their progress by means of internal feedback (i.e., they collect, reflect, and select writing products which best represent their writing ability throughout the portfolio process). The seventh step concerns internal feedback that requires learners to decide on the best drafts to put into their portfolios for evaluation by their peers and/or the teacher in the eighth step. The external feedback refers to either linguistic assistance from peers and/or the teacher or the resources found by the learners (e.g., use of dictionaries, library searches, and printed or online reference materials). In the ninth step, delayed evaluation in which learners can incorporate internal feedback and external feedback into their drafts, and

formative feedback provides learners with an opportunity to look back on steps one to four. It was noted, moreover, that six recommendations for EFL writing contexts, namely format, procedure, function, feedback, affect, and alignment were presented in detail with an attempt to help language teachers to apply the model in their teaching practices to foster SRL.

In summary, twenty-seven previous studies aimed at investigating approaches to or perceptions of fostering learner autonomy in EFL contexts. Most of the studies were related to technology-based learning while a few of them aimed at exploring students' perceptions or beliefs in their readiness for autonomy using learning tools, such as learning contracts, blogs, and (electronic) portfolios.

Regarding research methods, a mixed-methods design was the most commonly used and others were conducted with either pure qualitative research or pure quantitative research. It seems that a mixed-methods design was the optimal choice to address the research problems.

It is noteworthy that all the participants of the previous studies were university students, and the number of participants was compatible with the research design. Inevitably, quantitative research and mixed methods research were often conducted with a large number of participants for generalizability. The largest number of participants of all was a total of 769 in a study which used a mix-methods approach to the research. By contrast, qualitative research was carried out with a small number of participants because this kind of research focused on gaining in-depth information. The smallest number of participants employed in a qualitative study was four.

With regard to the data collection methods, in addition to the most popular instruments, e.g., questionnaire and interviews, a variety of instruments such as

journals, log records, self-reports, electronic documents, email messages, class syllabi, anecdotal records, classroom observations, self-assessments, self-reflections were also used as a means to elicit approaches to developing learner autonomy.

The data in most of the studies were collected and analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. For quantitative data, descriptive statistics, factor analysis, t-tests or one-way ANOVA, and correlation analysis were the most commonly used methods of analysis, whereas content analysis was used to analyze qualitative data.

Even though each study had its own focus, they obtained the following common findings. Firstly, technology had positive effects on learner autonomy, i.e., it could help to increase students' interest and motivation in learning a language, and offer environment and structures to encourage students to take control of their learning. Secondly, students seemed to be ready to take responsibility for their learning, yet they did not have many opportunities to do so. Student participants believed that they were responsible for their own learning and when they were offered opportunities, they had a positive attitude toward an autonomous learning environment, or they thought that learner autonomy was important in an EFL classroom. In practice, however, they had not been provided with such opportunities since their performance tended to be assessed through fixed score systems. Thirdly, the findings showed the effects of (e)-portfolios on learner autonomy. Particularly, portfolios helped students to take responsibility for their learning, conduct some research, identify their strengths and weaknesses and have opportunities to learn at their own pace, whereas electronic portfolios enabled students to identify goals, to make choices about artifacts, and to modify strategies for further improvement. However, Aliweh's (2011) study reported that there were no significant

effects of electronic portfolios on writing competence or learner autonomy due to extraneous variables.

Not only do the previous studies provide useful lessons that can be applied in this study, but they also help the researcher to identify a research gap to be filled. Therefore, the present study will be conducted with a mixed-methods research approach by collecting both quantitative and qualitative data through a range of data collection instruments, such as questionnaires, interviews, tests, portfolios, and reflection journals. In addition, measures for data analysis which can be used in this study comprise descriptive statistics, t-tests, and content analysis. Based on the findings of the previous studies, the researcher will also attempt to investigate the potential effects of portfolios in the context of language teaching and learning in Vietnam. Aside from the earlier-discussed issues, the researcher would like to explore other aspects in the present study that might not yet have been studied previously. Specifically, to the knowledge of the researcher, there have not been any studies which have been conducted to explore the significant effects of portfolios on learner autonomy and their writing ability in the EFL context or, more interestingly, a portfolio-based model for developing learner autonomy in an EFL writing context.

2.6 Summary

This chapter has discussed the relevant literature including the concept of learner autonomy, the nature of writing, portfolios, and previous studies, which shed light on the content of the next chapters. This literature review started with the theoretical background of learner autonomy which included its definition, characteristics of an autonomous learner, and assessment methods for autonomous

learning. Then knowledge of writing skills and the teaching of writing has been addressed. Next, the definitions of portfolios and portfolio assessment have been reviewed in this chapter. In addition, various instructional design models have been presented. The chapter ended with a summary of previous studies regarding learner autonomy. The research methodology will be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research methodology used to achieve the objectives determined in Chapter 1. It consists of details about the research design, the research setting, the participants, training the learners, the instruments, the data collection and the analysis, and the pilot study. Ethical issues are also discussed as an important part of this study.

3.1 Research Questions

The main focus of this study was on the construction of a model for developing learner autonomy through the use of portfolios in an EFL writing course (the PLAD model) at Nong Lam University (NLU), Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC). In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the following research questions were formulated:

1. Does the PLAD model help to develop learner autonomy in an EFL writing course? If so, how?

2. Does the PLAD model help to develop learners' writing competence during the course? If so, how? Which writing strategies are the most preferred by the learners?

3. What are the learners' perceptions of the PLAD model? What factors contribute to their support for or resistance to promoting learner autonomy through the use of a portfolio in the writing course?

3.2 Research Design

Mixed-methods research, a combination of qualitative and quantitative research, is often used in educational research as "it is less likely that [researchers] miss something important or make a mistake" (Johnson & Christensen, 2012, p. 51). More importantly, when both of the methods are concurrently employed in a study, they can support each other. This combination can occur concurrently or sequentially (i.e., one part first and the other second) to answer a research question (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). That is why mixed-methods research was employed in this study.

Specifically, this study is a kind of quasi-experimental research using an intact class as Seliger and Shohamy (1997) demonstrates, "[quasi-experimental] research is conducted under conditions in which it is difficult to control many of the variables and in which subjects cannot be assigned to special groups for the purposes of the research" (p. 148). This means that the sample of this research was selected based on the availability of the participants. Regarding data collection methods, it was noteworthy that this study was qualitative-focused research, thus qualitative data were obtained by most of the instruments including a questionnaire with open-ended items, a semi-structured interview, and portfolios. Moreover, quantitative data were collected through tests and a questionnaire with closed-ended items. The specific steps of the research design are illustrated in Figure 3.1.

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┌─────────────────────┐
│ 1. Construction of  │
│      model          │
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│   2. Pilot study    │
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│   3. Main study     │
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│ 4. Evaluation and   │
│  revision of model  │
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│   5. PLAD model     │
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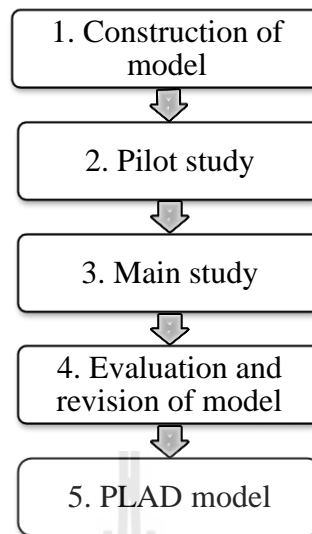
Figure 3.1 Research procedure

Step 1: Construction of model

After the review of related literature, previous studies, as well as the analysis and synthesis of the structure of the model, e.g., the stages of the model, the factors and information that should be included, etc. were examined. Finally, the components were identified. For this study, the PLAD model was composed of twelve steps (see section 3.6.2).

In order to validate the model before implementation, it was evaluated by three experts who specialized in instructional model design, EFL, and learner autonomy by means of the review form (see Appendix A) so that these experts were able to provide comments on what items should be used and what items should be modified or removed. Then the model was revised accordingly and modified based on the information collected from the evaluation by the experts.

Step 2: Pilot study

The ultimate goal of the pilot study was to examine whether or not the PLAD model was workable. In this study, a lesson plan, a representation of the model, was first tested for nine hours (one unit) and then tried out in a class which it was assumed would be similar to that of the main study. During the pilot study, the research instruments such as the portfolio, the questionnaire, the test, and the semi-structured interview were also conducted. Some adjustments were made after the pilot study.

Step 3: Main study

In this step, the proposed model was implemented in the class. There were three main steps: Pre-training, implementation of the model and data collection. Before the implementation, pre-training was offered to learners. During and after the full implementation of the model, the data were collected. The details of data collection are discussed in section 3.8.

Step 4: Evaluation and revision of model

The model was evaluated and revised by the researcher using the results obtained from the main study. After that, the revision of the model was checked by the supervisor of the researcher.

Step 5: The PLAD model

The Portfolio-based Learner Autonomy Development (PLAD) model was completed and applied in later writing courses.

3.3 Research Setting

This study was undertaken at the Faculty of Foreign Languages (FFL) of Nong Lam University (NLU), Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. FFL comprises the departments of Foreign Literature, TESOL Methodology, Applied Linguistics, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and Management. All teaching staff at FFL currently have at least Master's degrees and nine years' experience of English teaching. In order to be English majors at FFL, learners have to pass the national university entrance exams which consist of three subjects: Mathematics, Literature, and English.

According to the official curriculum, the Bachelor of Arts training program is composed of two phases: A general phase and a specialized phase which are taught in eight terms. The courses in the first four terms focus on language practice, including listening, speaking, reading, writing, pronunciation, and grammar. English majors are required to take three general writing courses in the first three semesters before the IELTS-oriented writing course taught in the fourth semester. There are thirty hours for Writing I or Writing II, whereas Writing III is forty-five hours. Writing I aims at providing knowledge concerning grammar and structure in order for learners to make complete sentences; the focal point of Writing II is to help learners to study various kinds of paragraphs and then to write up a certain paragraph; and Writing III focuses on writing up an essay, all of which serve as the basis for the later IELTS-oriented writing course. This study focused on Writing III and was scheduled in the third term. It is important to note that the general phase is compulsory, i.e., all learners need to complete all courses in this phase.

Another important factor in the quality of training is the school facilities. The facilities at FFL have been considerably upgraded in recent years. Concerning class

size, there is a maximum of 35 learners in a class. Language learners may have many opportunities for practice in such a small class. In addition to the facilities at FFL, learners can make use of the useful resources in the NLU library. For self-study, there is a self-access center in the library equipped with computers, and learners can access the Internet at their convenience with the help of the library staff.

3.4 Participants

The participants comprised thirty-five second-year English majors at FFL-NLU who were selected by using the convenience sampling method. This means that the researcher randomly chose one class that was arranged by the online registration system. Of the thirty-five participants, there were seven males (20%) and twenty-eight females (80%). The findings obtained from the questionnaire showed that all the participants had known about learner autonomy before attending the writing course despite the different levels. Most of them (80%) believed that they knew about learner autonomy from teachers, the Internet, friends/seniors, books, newspapers, movies, and relatives, whereas a few participants (20%) were not sure about characteristics of learner autonomy, although they had ever heard about it before.

In addition, the participants had to take the first two writing courses prior to this course. Hence, they were supposed to know about the writing process (e.g., planning, drafting, revising, editing, etc.) and have knowledge of different types of paragraphs which is a good background for this course because the format of the textbook for essay writing is similar to that for paragraph writing.

As for the semi-structured interview, ten out of thirty-five participants were selected for the focus group semi-structured interview on the basis of their responses to

the question: "*Do you like to use a portfolio to develop learner autonomy in the writing course?*" in the questionnaire. Their responses were sorted into two groups: 'yes' and 'no'. Five respondents in each group whose portfolios contained sufficient information were chosen for the group semi-structured interviews. Ten participants were purposefully selected for the group semi-structured interview conducted one day after the final test on the basis of the following requirements:

- The portfolio included three main components, namely writing drafts, artifacts, and reflections and self-assessment. In particular, the reflections had to be clear and relevant.

- The responses to the questionnaire had to be clear and informative.

3.5 Writing Course

3.5.1 Course Description

Writing III was designed to enhance learners' academic essay writing skills. It was hoped that learners could make use of their knowledge of sentence structures and paragraph writing acquired from their studies in Writing I and II in their class.

As noted earlier, Writing III, which lasted for forty-five hours, was covered within 15 weeks consisting of one week for a mid-term test (i.e., there were fourteen weeks for teaching). This course was normally designed to provide learners with opportunities to write an academic essay, thus it was expected, through the writing practice, that students would be able to write an essay of different types (e.g., descriptive essays, opinion essays, comparison and contrast essays, and cause and effect essays) at the end of the course. For this study, moreover, learners were able to learn

autonomously and to deploy a portfolio in the writing course. The detailed course procedure for this study is presented in Appendix B.

The course contained pre-training in relation to learner autonomy, writing skills, and a portfolio as well as five units with different focuses (see Appendix B). The purpose of the pre-training was to help the participants to understand and be aware of the issues they were going to deal with (e.g., the concept of learner autonomy, writing skills, and a portfolio). After perceiving these issues, the participants set their long-term (the whole course) and short-term (Unit 1) goals and created a study plan for Unit 1 that served as a guideline in which the participants applied what they achieved from the pre-training into a real-life situation. Thus, the participants chose learning activities (e.g., lectures, presentation, discussion, or self-study) and collected learning materials concerning the differences and the similarities between a paragraph and an essay to put into their portfolio. In the following units (Units 2 & 4), the participants implemented the steps of the PLAD model with the help of the teacher. For example, they did not know how to search for the learning resources to support an opinion essay. The teacher suggested some resources to them such as the library, the Internet, newspapers. They then made decisions about their favorite resources and found the necessary information to solve their problem. In this regard, the teacher was a facilitator, a counselor, and a resource. In the last two units (Units 5 & 6), the participants carried out the steps of the PLAD model on their own, they themselves set learning goals, created a study plan, had freedom to choose learning issues (e.g., learning activities, materials, and writing strategies), self-assessed their writing pieces, and reflected on their learning achievements. The classification of the course was based on Nunan's (1997) model consisting of five levels of autonomy: Awareness, involvement, intervention, creation,

and transcendence. It is worth noting that learners reflected on the strengths and the weaknesses of the learning activities, the difficulties they encountered, and suggestions for the next lesson or unit. They also made a choice of the documents and artifacts that should be included in their portfolios in each unit.

3.5.2 The Textbook

The textbook of this course, *Effective Academic Writing 2,* written by Savage and Mayer (2005), was published by Oxford University Press. It includes six units, namely *paragraph to short essay*, *descriptive essays*, *narrative essays*, *opinion essays*, *comparison and contrast essays*, and *cause and effect essays*. As scheduled, however, the third unit, 'narrative essays', was not covered in this course because of the time limit. The textbook is one of a three book series which aims at providing learners and teachers with a practical and efficient approach to learning skills, knowledge, and strategies that are necessary for the coursework. It introduces academic essays to learners at intermediate level. The first unit reviews the paragraph structure and introduces how to develop and format an academic essay. The following units present different patterns of essays that learners need to master. Relevant grammatical points are introduced in each unit in order to support learners' writing. This textbook includes the necessary elements for college writing, e.g., authentic texts written by other learners on the same topic, concise and effective language presentations, useful writing outlines, collaborative learning activities, editing exercises and checklists, and learner-friendly appendices.

The structure of each unit consists of five parts which offer opportunities for learners to practice step by step. In the first part, 'stimulating ideas', authentic texts are given to help learners to connect their own knowledge and experiences with the writer's

ideas. Then learners move on to freewriting in which they can explore the topic regardless of mistakes about grammar and organization. Part 2, 'brainstorming and outlining', provides learners with opportunities to brainstorm ideas and vocabulary that they need for their writing. After that, learners make an outline for an essay by using the knowledge about rhetorical organizational features they have learned previously. The third part is 'developing your ideas'. The ultimate goal of this part is that learners are able to produce the first draft by means of developing their ideas based on the outline. Learners then use a peer review checklist to check each other's writing. After the completion of the first draft with peer reviews, learners edit their writing and produce the final draft in the following part, 'editing your writing'. The last part, named 'putting it all together', summarizes all the parts of a unit. Learners write a timed essay with the same rhetorical focus but on a different topic.

Most of the parts given in the textbook (e.g., stimulating ideas, brainstorming and outlining, developing your ideas, editing your writing, and putting it all together) were introduced throughout the course for this study through presentation and/or discussion. For example, the teacher posed a question: "What does an essay mean to you?". Learners discussed in pair or group how to give a definition of an essay. A few sub-parts like freewriting, brainstorming ideas, brainstorming vocabulary, a sample student essay, etc. were modified to get learners involved in learning activities as autonomous learners. For instance, the participants had freedom to make use of materials for their writing from various sources in lieu of using the photos, exercises or texts available in the textbook. In doing so, learners were able to promote not only their autonomy but also enrich their writing.

3.5.3 Course Evaluation

The evaluation criteria for the writing class were composed of five elements (see Appendix B), namely attendance (10%), group work (10%), assignments (20%), the mid-term test (30%), and the final test (30%). The participants had to attend a succession of fifteen class meetings in one term. Regarding group work, four units (e.g., 'descriptive essays', 'opinion essays', 'comparison and contrast essays', and 'cause and effect essays') were divided into twelve parts for twelve groups of three (see Appendix B). Learners had freedom to choose partners, cast lots for the content they dealt with and choose their own presentation methods. This means that each unit fell into three parts, and each group of learners was responsible for presenting one part. In addition to the presentations, the participants' efforts in making questions and answering questions from the teacher and/or peers were taken into account. After each unit, the participants wrote a timed essay as an assignment.

After the first three units, the mid-term test was carried out with the content that learners had produced during the first eight weeks, and the final test addressed the content of the last two units. However, the format of the mid-term test was similar to that of the final test which was evaluated on the basis of the following criteria: Content (30%), language use (25%), organization (20%), vocabulary (20%), and mechanics, e.g., spelling and punctuation (5%).

With reference to the grading scheme, according to Decision No. 43/2007/QĐ-BGDĐT on the regulations of credit-based training at the tertiary level, learning performance is evaluated by means of a 10-band marking scheme and converted into letter-grade equivalents: A (8.5 – 10), B (7.0 – 8.4), C (5.5 – 6.9), D (4.0 – 5.4), and F (0 – 3.9). Learners' grade point average (GPA) for each term is calculated by the grades

of A, B, C, D, and F which are ranked from A (equivalent to 4), B (equivalent to 3), C (equivalent to 2), D (equivalent to 1), and F (equivalent to 0). After each term, the GPA of learners must be at least C. If they get a D or even an F for a course, they need to take the course again to improve their grade. For this study, the 10-point grading scale applied to evaluate learners' writing performance in the course of Writing III was converted letter-grade equivalents as presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 A Grade Conversion Scale

Level	Points earned	Grade point equivalent	Letter-grade equivalent
Excellent	10-8.5	4	A
Good	8.4-7.0	3	B
Fair	6.9-5.5	2	C
Average	5.4-4.0	1	D
Poor	3.9-0	0	F

3.6 Learner Training

The notion of learner training is not new, yet it is acknowledged in different views. Despite the different views on what learner training means, researchers probably agree that learner training aims at preparing learners for autonomous learning. More obviously, learner training focuses on how to learn rather than what to learn (Ellis & Sinclair, 1989). Learners should be given training concerning both psychological preparation and methodological preparation. The aim of psychological preparation is to help learners to build their confidence and a sense of responsibility, and that of methodological preparation is to equip learners with strategies and techniques for

autonomous learning. Thus, it was necessary to present learner training as an important step to prepare learners for learner autonomy in this study.

3.6.1 Pre-training

For this study, the pre-training, which gave an introduction to the learning program, took about six hours. Major issues such as learners' learning styles, an introduction to autonomous learning, a study plan, writing strategies and process, scoring schemes, and portfolio development needed to be included in the pre-training as illustrated in Figure 3.2. The aim of the pre-training is to help the participants to gain more confident and know what they are going to do because most of these issues are new to them.
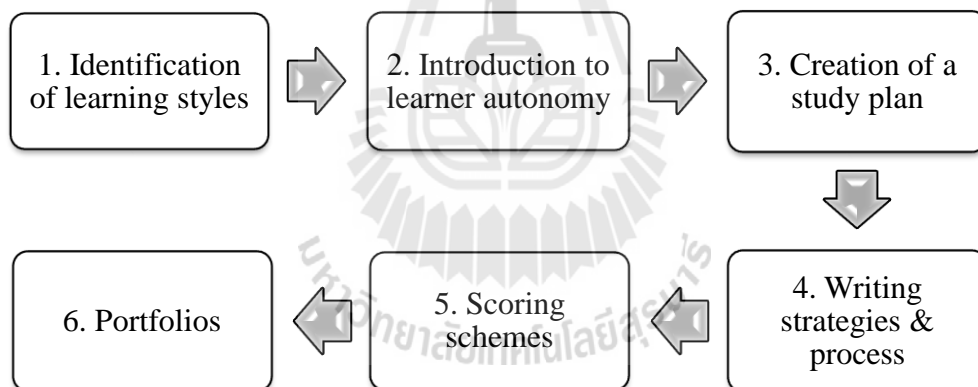
Figure 3.2 Pre-training procedure

First of all, learning styles (see Appendix C) were identified before the course since it may help to raise learners' awareness of their present learning styles as well as their existing writing ability. Specifically, the participants chose their preferred learning styles and read the description of their learning styles which were pasted on the classroom walls. Participants who had common learning styles were put together in a discussion group and then they shared their experiences with the other groups.

Secondly, a general introduction to an autonomous learning environment was shown via two video clips of autonomous learning and teacher-directed learning environments downloaded from the webpage https://www.youtube.com. After that, there was a discussion about the differences of the videos amongst the participants so that learners had a general view on learner autonomy. Finally, the knowledge of degrees of learner autonomy created by Nunan (1997), including awareness, involvement, intervention, creation, and transcendence was introduced to learners so as to raise their awareness of learner autonomy. It was apparent that these degrees were manifested through the pre-training, i.e., they were able to be aware of what they were going to learn, got involved in writing strategies, modified and created a study plan, etc.

Thirdly, the participants were guided how to plan their learning by catering for a sample study plan which consisted of the estimated learning time and date, learning goals, and general and specific strategies to achieve the goals (see Appendix D). This step aimed at enabling learners to make a feasible study plan for their learning.

Fourthly, a list of writing strategies (see Appendix E) and the writing process was introduced to learners in the pre-training. The teacher showed writing strategies and the writing process to the learners. Learners first discussed these strategies with their partners and supplemented their own writing strategies. Then they made a choice of writing strategies that were supposed to help to develop the writing tasks. In addition, the writing process was included in the pre-training so that learners were able to take note of the steps they needed to carry out to complete a writing task. More importantly, learners had an opportunity to choose learning activities, materials, and topics used in their learning process. In 'stimulating ideas', for instance, they could choose one activity from a range of activities (e.g., discussing the picture available in the textbook

with partners, discussing the picture they found with their partners, or discussing the content of a video with partners).

Fifthly, it was necessary for the participants to know how to score their own writing. The participants worked in groups of three or four to score three different sample writing pieces based upon a writing assessment rubric (see Table 2.3). This was followed by discussions on the strengths and weaknesses of each writing piece.

Finally, learners needed to know what a portfolio is, what items it includes, how it is used, and why it is used in the course. More importantly, learners should know how to create and develop a portfolio. Therefore, the teacher showed a sample portfolio to learners as an example. Furthermore, learners assessed and graded their own portfolios and their peers' portfolios using a portfolio assessment checklist with evaluation criteria (see Appendix M). A detailed description of the portfolio is presented in section 3.7.3.

In summary, the students were given an introduction to learning styles, the autonomous learning environment, a study plan, writing strategies and process, scoring schemes, and a portfolio aimed at helping to raise learners' awareness of what they were going to deal with. The pre-training was believed to contribute to the success of this study; thus, it was essential to introduce these issues to learners prior to the course.

3.6.2 Portfolio-based Learner Autonomy Development

Writing III was taught with the use of a portfolio-based learner autonomy development model (see Figure 3.3) that was adapted from Lam's (2013) conceptual model of self-regulated learning in a context of portfolio assessment (see section 2.5), Huitt's (2003) model of teaching/learning process which consists of four components: Context (i.e., all factors outside the classroom which may influence teaching and learning), input (i.e., what learners and teachers bring into the classroom process), the

classroom process (i.e., the teacher's and learners' behaviors in a classroom), and output (i.e., measures of learners' learning), and instructional design (ISD) models, namely the ADDIE model, the Dick and Carey systems approach model, and the ASSURE Model (see section 2.4).

In addition to the adaptation of Lam's (2013) conceptual model, Huitt's (2003) model of teaching/learning process, and ISD models, the PLAD model was supplemented with other components of learner autonomy, such as creating a study plan and selecting resources. In order for readers to get more understanding of the model, its specific steps are described below. It is important to note that the arrows reflect the process of the PLAD model from the first step, *portfolio tasks,* to the last step, *summative evaluation.* The double arrows refer to the interrelation between self-monitoring and other processes through learners' internal feedback.

(1) Portfolio tasks

As stated in section 2.3.1, a portfolio includes written work samples and self-assessment. Accordingly, the portfolio tasks in each unit of the essay writing course consist of various pieces of writing (e.g., first drafts, revised drafts, and final drafts), self-assessment using the self-assessment checklist and the writing assessment rubric, reflection (e.g., writing logs, reflection on likes and dislikes of the course), and artifacts related to the writing topic.
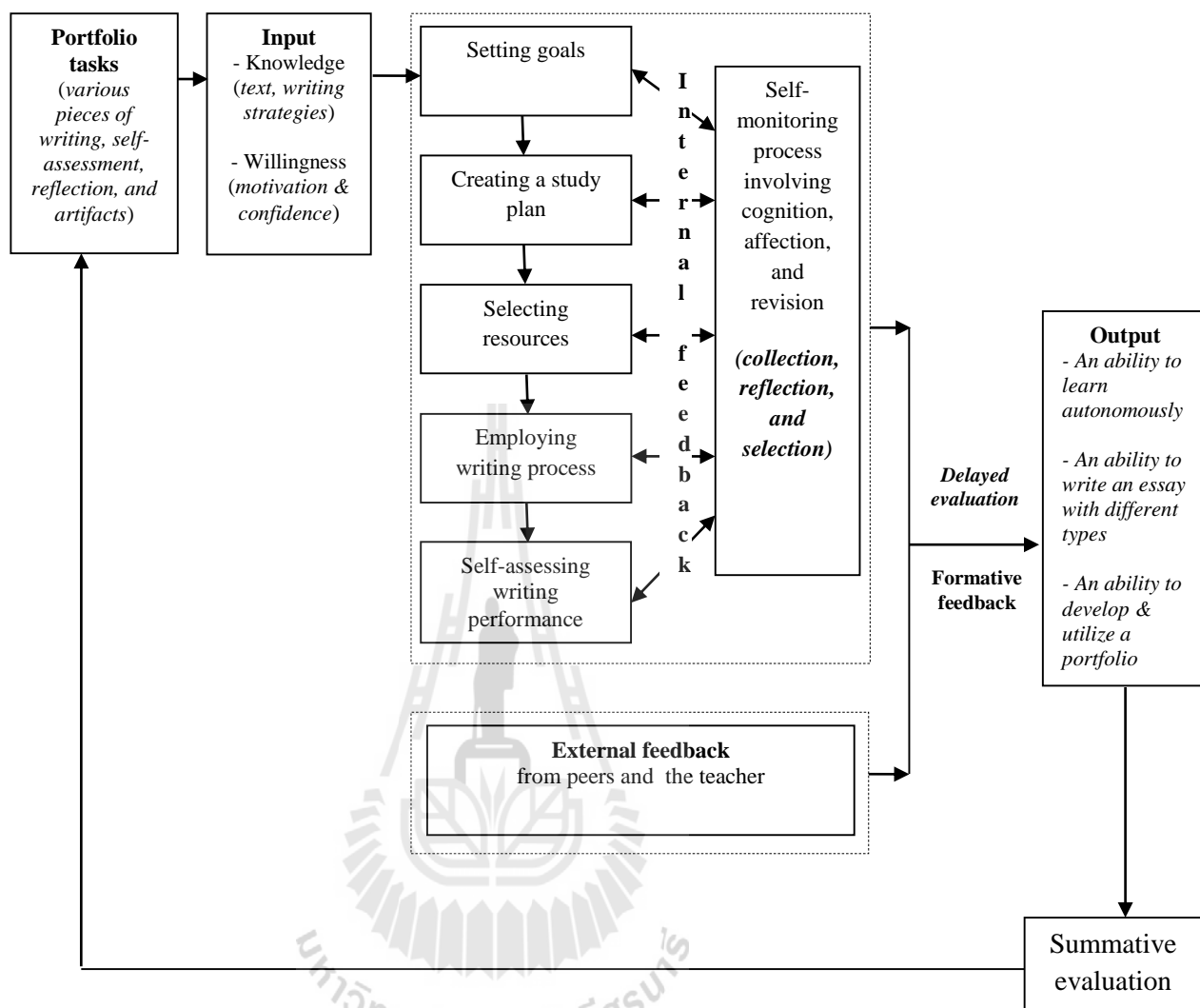
Figure 3.3 The proposed portfolio-based learner autonomy development (PLAD)

model in an EFL writing course

(2) Input

Learners have to equip themselves with the ability to use their knowledge of texts and writing strategies as well as willingness concerning motivation and confidence because learner autonomy prefers that learners get actively involved in their own learning process (Nunan & Lamb, 1996). This means that learners need to get involved in the decision-making process.

(3) Setting goals

There are two types of learning goals set by learners: Long-term and short-term goals. The long-term goals address what learners expect to achieve throughout the writing course, whereas the short-term goals focus on what they expect to achieve in each unit. Specifically, learners first analyze their language needs and choose writing strategies that they would like to employ in their writing tasks. They then set their long-term goals to see the overall picture of what they are going to achieve after the course. Finally, they set the short-term goals for each unit.

(4) Creating a study plan

Based upon the learning goals, learners create a study plan so that they are aware of time management and learning activities. For each unit, they identify their short-term learning goals, the allotted time to achieve these goals, the kinds of activities, and specific strategies to implement the tasks decided upon in their learning goals (see Appendix D).

(5) Selecting resources

Apart from the textbook, learners are encouraged to explore other resources and freely choose materials supporting their writing tasks with the following steps. Learners first decide the purpose of a writing task. Then they look for materials using the teacher's guide from various sources such as the Internet, newspapers, academic writing, grammar references, and dictionaries. Lastly, they work in pair or group to share the information they have found and then they discuss some of the points they intend to practice in the writing task.

(6) The writing process

As presented in Chapter 2, there has been a debate on the process of teaching writing; thus, the following steps of the writing process were adapted from the writing process models made by previous researchers (e.g., Brookes & Grundy, 1991; Curry & Hewings, 2003; Tribble, 1996).

1. Prewriting: Learners brainstorm ideas, i.e., they collect ideas from the materials relating to a topic. They then jot down all the ideas that occur to them.

2. Planning: Learners make an outline for an essay. A given outline in the textbook can be viewed as a good example.

3. Drafting: At this stage, the main focus is on the meaning rather than the mechanics of writing, such as spelling, punctuation, and sentence structures. Accordingly, learners produce their first draft by means of the ideas they collected in the prewriting stage.

4. Reflecting: After the first draft, learners take time to reflect on their own writing with the editor's checklist available in the textbook.

5. Revising: Learners revise their own writing with the help of external feedback from peers and/or the teacher as discussed in step *(9)*. The main emphasis of this stage is on the development and clarity of the ideas and the structure of the text. When doing the revision, it is necessary to take a look back on the stages of reflecting and drafting.

6. Editing: A range of issues, namely language use, vocabulary, organization, and mechanics need editing.

(7) Self-assessing writing performance

Learners self-grade their writing pieces using the writing assessment rubric (see Table 2.3) after they finish the writing process presented in step *(6)*. Based on this assessment, it is expected that they are able to identify their actual writing performance and further see whether their writing pieces meet the predetermined learning goals and they have made improvements in comparison with their previous writing pieces. Then, learners choose writing drafts of each unit (e.g., a first draft, a revised draft, a final draft) to put into a portfolio for later assessment which is carried out by the teacher.

(8) Self-monitoring learning process

In language education, it is also essential for learners to self-monitor their learning process through internal feedback which consists of cognition, affection, and revision. Additionally, the elements of the portfolios, namely collection, reflection, and selection are included in the self-monitoring process. For example, when EFL learners search for resources, they need to think about how to select the most appropriate resources to use for their writing. In brief, self-monitoring is interrelated with all the other steps. This means that a portfolio is used to help learners to reflect on and evaluate their work.

Given the definition of Benson (2001) presented in section 2.1.1, self-monitoring can be viewed as the ability to take control of the cognitive process, one of the three aspects of learner autonomy. Reflection which is one of the elements of the cognitive process is emphasized in relation to the development of learner autonomy. Learners reflect on their learning performance based on suggested questions like '*How did I do?'*, *'What did I learn?'*, *'What was great?'*, *'What can I do better next week?'* in the writing log (see Appendix D).

(9) External feedback from peers/teacher

Learners give feedback to their peers' written work for each unit in class. Besides reviewing the written work with the use of the editor's checklist available in the textbook and writing assessment rubric, they give comments on the written work based on suggested questions such as *'What do you like about the paper?', 'What facts or ideas can be added to the paper?', 'What changes can be made to improve the paper?'.* Then the learners have a discussion about each other's reviews. If they have any further questions following the discussion, they can ask their teacher for help or advice.

(10) Delayed evaluation and formative feedback

Delayed evaluation offers learners opportunities to review their written work before the summative evaluation conducted by their EFL teacher. Formative feedback conducted by learners involves reviewing the portfolio tasks and the learning goals.

(11) Output

Given the activities provided during the learner training, learners are assumed to possess an ability to learn autonomously, an ability to write different types of essays (e.g., grasping rhetorical focus and language focus of each type), and an ability to develop and utilize a portfolio.

(12) Summative evaluation

The last step is summative evaluation which is conducted by the teacher. The teacher is supposed to evaluate learners' learning outcomes through their portfolios after the training to see how effective the training was. After the summative feedback, learners practice further; thus, a new learning cycle starts again.

In order to show readers how a portfolio was used in the writing course to develop learner autonomy and writing skills, a sample lesson plan was designed and presented in Appendix F.

3.7 Research Instruments

As presented in section 3.2, mixed methods research was used in this study. Hence, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected through a range of instruments such as questionnaire, semi-structured interview, test, and portfolio. Details about the construction and validation of each instrument are provided below.

3.7.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire in this study consisted of four parts. In part I, the participants were asked to provide their demographics (e.g., gender, past writing teaching methods experienced by learners, and their understanding about learner autonomy) in the first three questions. Part II focused on the participants' perceptions of their autonomous learning (e.g., setting learning goals for the writing course, creating a study plan, choosing learning materials, self-assessing their writing performance, and reflecting on their own learning) in terms of knowledge, awareness, and skills before and after the course. In particular, the participants self-assessed how much they knew about the aforementioned tasks, how much they were aware of these tasks, and how much they could carry them out by choosing the appropriate level for five closed-ended items designed in a five-point Likert scale (*1 = not at all, 2 = a little, 3 = average, 4 = a lot, 5 = very much*). More importantly, the participants then gave justification for their choice. Part III, which consisted of twenty-five closed-end items with a five-point Likert scale (*1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = always*), addressed

writing strategies that the participants used for their writing. In addition, the participants could write down their own writing strategies in the blank spaces provided. Apart from the closed-ended items, the participants were required to provide justification for their choice. Part IV, involving factors which influenced learner autonomy development throughout the course, had three questions: The first question was to examine whether the PLAD model helped to develop learner autonomy; the second question aimed to ask whether they would like to use a portfolio in an EFL writing class for autonomous learning; and the last question was an open-ended item in which the participants noted down their general remarks of this course. In general, both closed-ended and open-ended items were included in the questionnaire (see Appendix G). The questionnaire was adapted from some of the previous studies (e.g., Alnufaie & Grenfell, 2012; Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012; Haseborg 2012).

To enhance the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, it was written first in English and then translated into Vietnamese to ensure that the participants' understanding of the questionnaire was not affected by their English proficiency. Additionally, the English version was checked by an expert on content validity, and the Vietnamese version was cross-checked by a Vietnamese teacher of English, who was the researcher's colleague, for the accuracy of the translated version. In essence, piloting the questionnaire helped to increase the quality of the questionnaire because it is known that a pilot study can help to increase the reliability, validity, and practicality of research instruments (e.g., Oppenheim, 1999; Radhakrishna, 2007; Seliger & Shohamy, 1997). Last but not least, the reliability of the questionnaire, quantitatively calculated by Cronbach, was .87, which means that the questionnaire was reliable enough to be employed.

3.7.2 Test

In this study, two tests of low explicitness (e.g., mid-term and final) were employed to evaluate the development of writing competence over time. The participants wrote an essay for the mid-term and the final test. Regarding the administration of the tests, the teacher researcher who was in charge of the course prepared and administered the mid-term test by herself. Meanwhile, she needed to prepare the final achievement test according to the IELTS-based format provided. Then all the test items were checked and modified if necessary and randomly selected for the official achievement test by the head of TESOL methodology department. A sample of the writing achievement test is presented in Appendix H. The test included three questions of different types of essay. The students chose and wrote an essay about one of three given topics in 60 minutes. Some issues relating to the length of an essay, rhetorical focus, and language focus should be taken into account. The participants' writing pieces were evaluated based upon criteria including content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics as described in Table 2.3.

To validate tests, it is necessary to estimate inter-rater reliability for data collection of low explicitness (Seliger & Shohamy, 1997). Accordingly, the evaluation of the writing test was made by teachers of writing at the researcher's university. Then the results were compared and discussed to reach an agreement. For the validity of the tests, content and criterion validity was considered. The aim of the content validity was to find out whether the content of the writing test represented that of the textbook from which learners were studied throughout the course. For criterion validity, the format of the test was based on the IELTS writing test.

3.7.3 Portfolio

On the basis of the nine characteristics described in a portfolio (see section 2.3.1), a portfolio was developed in this study with the three major components as follows.

1. Collection: All drafts including first drafts, revised drafts, and final drafts were recorded in their portfolios. In addition, the participants chose and gathered artifacts relevant to essay writing by themselves (e.g., articles, photos, advertisements, etc.). Last but not least, documents regarding reflection and self-assessment were also included. The collection aimed at showing their successful endeavors and growth opportunities in their day-to-day learning.

2. Selection: The participants selected pieces of writing that best represented their writing skills and put them in their portfolios for judgment at the end of the writing course. After producing the first draft, for example, a learner assessed the first draft using a self-assessment checklist (see Appendix K) and then revised it. Next, a peer review was conducted using a peer assessment checklist (see Appendix L), and the learner revised the draft accordingly. Then the learner chose the best drafts to put in the portfolio. Furthermore, the artifacts used should be shown as evidence of how the writing of the essay developed. This stage helps to promote learners' self-assessment skill as well.

3. Reflection and self-assessment: Reflection, which is generally an effective tool for assessment and instruction is the key component in portfolio development (Bullock & Hawk, 2005). Thus, it was applied to investigate

the participants' progress over time. Reflections in a writing log (see Appendix D) were written after each unit and also reflections on what they liked and disliked about the course were freely jotted down at a certain time in class by every single participant. These reflections were associated with elements like metacognitive development (i.e., learners' capacity to improve their ability to think about their thinking, such as planning, monitoring, evaluating, or managing one's own learning), self-assessment (i.e., learners' capacity to judge the quality of their portfolios based on a portfolio assessment checklist (see Appendix M), and decision-making ability (i.e., learners' capacity to decide what they learned and how they learned it).

Before the portfolio was used in the present study, it was tried out in the pilot study to make sure that it was workable. Additionally, the portfolio assessment (i.e., these components were analyzed to see the development of learner autonomy) was conducted by the researcher and also a colleague in order to increase the reliability of the assessment. In particular, after separately assessing the participants' pieces of writing in their portfolios, the researcher and her colleague discussed each of the papers. This was necessary to ensure that inter-rater reliability was established to reduce any personal bias in the assessment.

3.7.4 Semi-structured Interview

Of the three types of interview, the semi-structured interview was selected for data collection in this study because it yielded the data necessary for answering the research questions. There were three parts in the interview (see Appendix I): The first part addressed autonomous learning skills; the second part involved the factors

influencing the development of learner autonomy; and the last part focused on writing competence. The interview questions were adapted from Chu (2004) and Dang (2012).

Regarding the validation of the semi-structured interview, the researcher's supervisor checked the content of the interview questions and gave feedback on it. All the predetermined questions of the semi-structured interview were written in English and then translated into Vietnamese so that the language barriers would not affect the results of the interview and this also allowed in-depth information to be obtained. After the interview, all the information was transcribed into English. One Vietnamese teacher of English was invited to check the accuracy of the translated documents. It was also essential to pilot the interview before implementing it to ensure the appropriateness of the interview questions.

To sum up, the four kinds of instruments, including the questionnaire, the semi-structured interview, the test, and the portfolio were used to collect either quantitative or qualitative data with the aim to elicit information about the development of learner autonomy and writing competence via the portfolio in the writing course.

3.8 Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

The data of this study were collected through the following four types of instruments and analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively as illustrated in Figure 3.4.
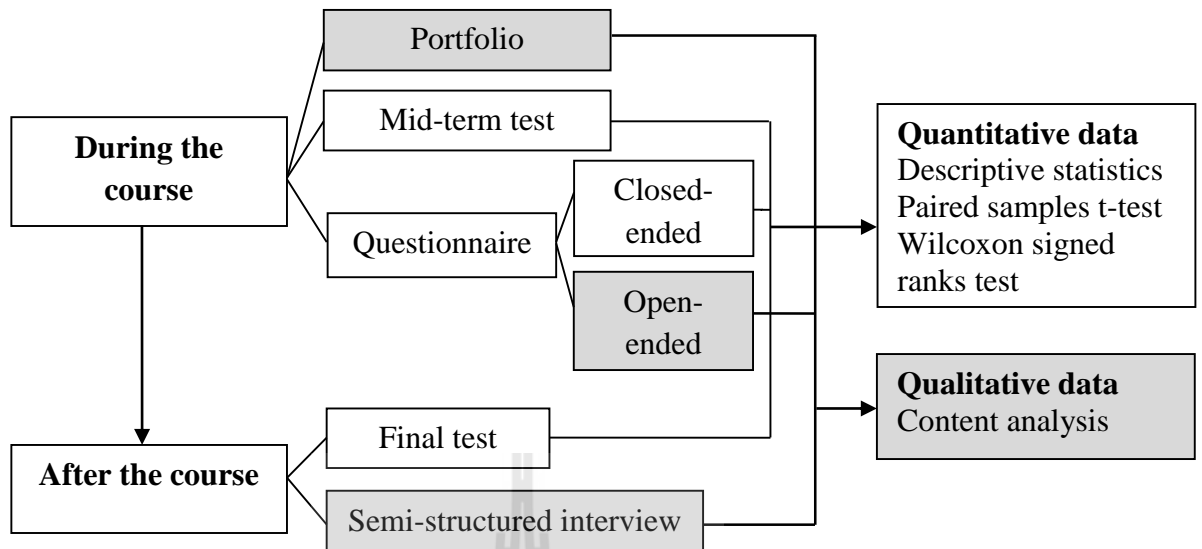
Figure 3.4 Data collection and analysis procedure

3.8.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was delivered to all the participants one week before the last week. This was because the sampling selection for the follow-up semi-structured interview was based on the participants' responses to the questionnaire. The participants answered the questionnaire in class so that the teacher researcher could help them to clarify any problems. It took the students about ten minutes to answer the questionnaire on autonomous learning and writing strategies. As mentioned earlier, the questionnaire was administered to the participants in Vietnamese so that they could more easily answer the questions. The respondents were labeled from the first (SQ1) to the last (SQ35).

To analyze the data obtained from the questionnaire for the closed-ended items, it was necessary to employ SPSS 19.0 in which descriptive statistics (e.g., mean, standard deviation, and frequencies/percentages) and inferential statistics (e.g., paired samples t-test & Wilcoxon signed ranks test) were used to investigate the frequencies

of autonomous learning performance, effects of the PLAD model on autonomous learning, and the frequency of the writing strategies. Meanwhile, the qualitative data obtained from the questionnaire for the open-ended items were analyzed through content analysis as discussed in section 3.8.4.

3.8.2 Test

All the participants took the mid-term test and the final test which were conducted in the middle of and at the end of the course, respectively, to examine the differences in terms of learners' writing competence development throughout the course. The allotted time for the mid-term and final tests was 60 minutes. No materials were allowed to be used during the test time.

Regarding the data analysis, the scores of the tests were statistically compared with one another using SPSS 19.0. This means that the mid-term test and the final test were analyzed through the paired samples t-test to see the development of the participants' writing ability over time.

3.8.3 Portfolio

A portfolio was developed by all the participants throughout the course. To ensure that they knew how to develop the portfolios, the participants had opportunities to discuss their portfolios with the teacher, and some portfolios were randomly selected for assessment after each unit (excluding the first and last units). For the final assessment, all the portfolios collected in the last week (week 15) by the researcher were qualitatively analyzed through content analysis. The portfolios were labeled from the first (SP1) to the last (SP35).

The portfolios employed in this study had the following components: Writing drafts (e.g., first drafts, revised drafts, and final drafts), artifacts (e.g., articles, photos,

advertisements, etc. relevant to pieces of writing) and reflections (e.g., writing logs and reflections on likes and dislikes of the course). As noted in section 3.7.3, the participants chose their best writing drafts to put into the portfolios. They also searched for and made use of artifacts that helped to improve their writing. The participants first wrote reflections on their learning achievements after each unit and reflections on the good points as well as the pitfalls of the course (i.e., comparison of their writing performance with the predetermined learning goals and the current writing pieces in this unit with those in previous units to see improvements, reasons for choosing documents included in portfolios, freedom in making decisions about learning activities, methods, tasks and materials, difficulties they had encountered throughout the unit, likes and dislikes, and changes that should be made for the next unit were included). Briefly, they reviewed their achievements as well as the obstacles they may have experienced during the development of the portfolio. Aside from the self-assessment checklist which was used to edit the writing pieces, the participants then self-graded their writing pieces using writing assessment rubrics so that they were able to determine how good their writing performance was.

3.8.4 Semi-structured Interview

The participants were equally divided into two groups: (1) a supportive group (i.e., they liked to learn autonomously with a portfolio in a writing class) and (2) a resistant group (i.e., they disliked to learn autonomously with a portfolio in a writing class). These two groups were interviewed separately from each other. It was estimated that each group interview was conducted for one hour. To get as much information from the interviewees as possible, Vietnamese was used during the interviews. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed immediately after they were finished.

The interviewees were labeled from the first (SI1) to the fifth (SI5) for the supportive group and from the sixth (SI6) to the tenth (SI10) for the resistant group.

Whilst quantitative data were analyzed using various measures, the qualitative data obtained from the questionnaires with open-ended items, the portfolios, and the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using content analysis by means of the following three steps. The first step is familiarizing and organizing. To begin with, the researcher put data into a form, read and reread the transcripts to familiarize herself with the data and then made a list of the different types of information. It should be noted that the researcher kept the original transcripts, though they included grammatical errors. The second step is coding and recoding. According to Lankshear and Knobel (2004), "coding data refers simply to the process of applying codes to collected information that "flag" or remind the researcher about which data belongs in which categories" (p. 271). The information obtained from the data collection methods was analyzed by open coding. That is to say, the researcher read and labeled or numbered all the information to form initial coding which led to the development of tentative categories of information about the phenomena being studied. Then all the codes were put into Word or Excel files. The researcher then grouped codes with the same features to form larger categories. Finally, themes were identified by discovering relationships or patterns of categories. For the last step, summarizing and interpreting, the researcher aimed to make the meaning of the categories and themes clear by using charts, graphs, tables, etc. to show their relationships or connections. After summarizing the data in this way, the researcher interpreted the data by stating the significance of what the researcher found from the previous steps and what could be learned from it. The sample

coding of data generated from the questionnaire using open-ended items, semi-structured interviews, and portfolios is presented in Appendix J.

To conclude, the data of this study were collected via four instruments, namely the questionnaire, test, portfolio, and semi-structured interview. Then the quantitative data from the questionnaire with closed-ended items and the tests were processed using SPSS 19.0, whereas the qualitative data from the questionnaires with open-ended items, portfolios, and semi-structured interviews were analyzed using content analysis. The data collection and analysis procedures are summarized in Table 3.2 in relation to the research questions.

Table 3.2 Summary of Instruments and Data Analysis in Relation to Research Questions

Research question (RQ)	Instrument	Data analysis
RQ1: Does the PLAD model help to develop learner autonomy in an EFL writing course?	• Semi-structured interview • Portfolio • Questionnaire	• Descriptive statistics • Wilcoxon signed ranks test • Content analysis
RQ2: Does the PLAD model help to develop the learners' writing competence during the course? If so, how? Which writing strategies are the most preferred by the learners?	• Test • Questionnaire • Portfolio • Semi-structured interview	• Descriptive statistics • Paired samples t-test • Content analysis
RQ3: What are the learners' perceptions of the PLAD model? What factors contribute to their support for or resistance to promoting learner autonomy through the use of a portfolio in the writing course?	• Portfolio • Semi-structured interview	• Content analysis

3.9 Pilot Study

A pilot study has been referred to as "the whole lengthy process of designing and trying out questions and procedures" (Oppenheim, 1999, p. 47). A pilot study helps to increase the reliability, validity, and practicality of the research instruments (e.g., Oppenheim, 1999; Seliger & Shohamy, 1997). Seliger and Shohamy (1997) point out that as a result of a pilot study, ambiguities and anomalies in questions are revealed. Regarding issues which need to be piloted, Oppenheim (1999) introduces such major issues as every question, its sequence, every inventory, and every scale in a study. Additionally, other factors, e.g., the question lay-out on the page, the instructions given to the respondents, the answer categories, and even the question-numbering system should be piloted (ibid.).

Prior to the main study, there was a pilot study containing the procedures, the format of the course, the learning environment, and the length of the course. Particularly, the researcher was in charge of the pilot class in which the PLAD model was implemented with the preparation of all the necessary facilities during a period of fifteen weeks. Thirty-five participants of the pilot study who were taking the Writing III course did not participate in the main study. In addition to piloting the PLAD model, the instruments included the questionnaire, the semi-structured interview, the test, and the portfolio which were all tested in the pilot study.

After the pilot study, it was necessary to make some adjustments. In respect of pre-training, the writing process (e.g., prewriting, planning, drafting, reflecting, revising, and editing) was introduced in detail to the learners who tended to focus on the product rather than the process, i.e., their main aim was to produce written work following the teacher's instructions. For this course, however, the learners needed to

focus more on the process than the product. Regarding reflection, a writing log, a combination of a study plan and reflection, was used instead of reflective journals or essays that were considered to be too complicated and time-consuming. With reference to the instruments, the portfolio assessment and the writing tests were modified. Instead of collecting all the portfolios for assessment at the same time at the end of the course, the researcher randomly chose some portfolios at the end of each unit to praise good points and give suggestions on any problems found in their portfolios.

3.10 Ethical Issues

After the research proposal was approved by the Examination Committee at Suranaree University of Technology, the researcher needed to ask the Dean of FFL-NLU for permission to conduct the study.

Concerning the data collection process, the participants were told about their privacy, the purposes of the study, and their right to participate in or withdraw from the study at any time. First, they were told their privacy would be respected and all their private information would be protected. For example, the participants could refuse to answer questions without any explanation, and the researcher would respected their privacy. Second, informed consent forms (see Appendix N) which are "crucial for the ethical conduct of research" (Rallis & Rossman, 2009, p. 276) were given to the participants at the beginning of the research project. The researcher needed to explain the purpose of the study and the informed consent forms to the participants. Each participant was required to sign his/her name or put his/her mark on a piece of paper. It was worth noting that the consent form created by the researcher was translated into Vietnamese to avoid any misunderstandings. Finally, the participants needed to be

informed that they had the right to participate in the study voluntarily and could withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice.

3.11 Summary

This chapter described the methodology used in the present research in ten main parts: (1) research questions, (2) research design describing types of research of which mixed-methods research was employed in this study, (3) research setting, (4) participants, (5) writing course, (6) learner autonomy training process, (7) research instruments (e.g., questionnaire, semi-structured interview, test, and portfolio), (8) data collection and analysis procedure, (9) pilot study, and (10) ethics. The results of the data collected from the aforementioned instruments will be analyzed and discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this chapter, quantitative and qualitative data collected from participants' responses to the questionnaire, the semi-structured interview, the portfolios, and the tests are analyzed and presented to answer the three research questions that are used as a framework for data presentation. Then the findings are discussed to elucidate the significant points.

4.1 Data Analysis

4.1.1 Learner Autonomy Development

Research question #1: Does the PLAD model help to develop learner autonomy in an EFL writing course? If so, how?

To deal with the first research question concerning learner autonomy development in terms of three core dimensions: *Knowledge*, *awareness*, and *skills* using a portfolio in an EFL writing class, the data generated from the learner questionnaire, semi-structured interview, and documents in the learner portfolios are analyzed.

4.1.1.1 Overall Results of the Three Dimensions

In this section, the results of the dimensions of *knowledge*, *awareness*, and *skills* are briefly presented to give a general picture of the learner autonomy development.

As displayed in Table 4.1, p-values of the three dimensions of *knowledge*, *awareness*, and *skills* (p = .000) were smaller than .001 (i.e., level of significance). This means that the null hypothesis stating that there was no significant difference the participants' *knowledge*, *awareness*, and *skills* of learner autonomy between before and after the course was rejected. In other words, there was a significant difference in terms of *knowledge*, *awareness*, and *skills* of learner autonomy between before and after the course. It was evident that the participants' skills and perceptions of autonomous learning were significantly promoted after the course.

With regard to average mean scores, furthermore, the participants obtained significantly higher average mean scores of *knowledge*, *awareness*, and *skills* of learner autonomy after the course ($\overline{X}$ = 3.21, $\overline{X}$ = 3.41, $\overline{X}$ = 3.29, respectively) than before ($\overline{X}$ = 2.07, $\overline{X}$ = 2.10, $\overline{X}$ = 1.97, respectively). Noticeably, the average mean score of *awareness* of learner autonomy which the participants obtained after the course was the highest of all.

In brief, the overall results of the three dimensions indicate that there was a increase in the participants' *knowledge*, *awareness*, and *skills* of learner autonomy after the course. This means that the PLAD model seems to help the participants to develop their autonomy in an EFL writing class.

Table 4.1 Paired Samples t-test of Knowledge, Awareness, and Skills of Learner

Autonomy

	Item	p	Before the course		After the course	
			$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD
Knowledge	Setting learning goals	.000	2.40	.91	3.37	.65
	Creating a study plan	.000	1.89	.63	3.20	.87
	Choosing learning materials	.000	1.74	.62	2.88	.91
	Self-assessing writing performance	.000	1.80	.72	2.94	.80
	Writing reflections	.000	2.54	1.14	3.66	.83
	Average	.000	2.07	.48	3.21	.57
Awareness	Setting learning goals	.000	2.34	1.11	3.63	.77
	Creating a study plan	.000	1.83	.85	3.11	.90
	Choosing learning materials	.000	1.83	.57	3.17	.92
	Self-assessing writing performance	.000	1.97	.82	3.20	.83
	Writing reflections	.000	2.46	1.07	3.91	.89
	Average	.000	2.10	.63	3.41	.63
Skills	Setting learning goals	.000	2.00	.84	3.34	.73
	Creating a study plan	.000	1.83	.71	3.31	.72
	Choosing learning materials	.000	1.89	.72	3.20	.83
	Self-assessing writing performance	.000	1.83	.57	3.00	.80
	Writing reflections	.000	2.29	.89	3.57	.78
	Average	.000	1.97	.47	3.29	.51

Note. $p \leq .001$

4.1.1.2 Detailed Results of the Three Dimensions

This section provides a detailed results of the three dimensions through analyzing their differences in the lowest rated tasks and in ranks. Firstly, the three dimensions varied in the lowest rated tasks, although they had the highest rated task, 'writing reflections', in common. As can be observed in Table 4.1, *knowledge* of 'choosing learning materials' ($\overline{X}$ = 1.74, $\overline{X}$ = 2.88, respectively), *awareness* of 'creating a study plan' ($\overline{X}$ = 1.83, $\overline{X}$ = 3.11, respectively) and *skill* of 'self-assessing writing performance' ($\overline{X}$ = 1.83, $\overline{X}$ = 3.00, respectively) were the lowest rated tasks both before and after the course. In short, the lowest rated tasks were various in these dimensions. This may be implied that a participant who is not good at a particular task can be good at others or vice versa.

In order to maintain clarity of the lowest rated tasks, it was necessary to provide the qualitative data obtained from the questionnaire with open-ended items and semi-structured interview. Concerning *knowledge* of 'choosing learning materials', most of the respondents felt confused about the sources (e.g., categorizing and putting names of artifacts), suitability (i.e., whether or not materials are suitable for a topic or their ability), or quality (i.e., whether or not materials are good or reliable). Hence, they primarily used the textbook as a core book.

With regard to *awareness* of 'creating a study plan', several respondents admitted that a clear study plan may direct their learning in a logical and effective way which contained clear purposes, suitable learning methods, particular time, specific strategies, and reflections, yet there remained some pitfalls which are addressed in section 4.2.4.2

As far as *skill* of 'self-assessing writing performance' was concerned, the participants assessed and graded their writing pieces using writing assessment rubric which consisted of five clearly-stated criteria (see Table 2.3). They revealed that this step was really challenging to them at first, yet they gradually got familiar with this and found it helpful for their learning.

Secondly, the results analyzed through Wilcoxon signed ranks test showed a difference in ranks. Theoretically, there are three types of ranks: (1) 'negative ranks' referring to a value (i.e., a value obtained after the course) that is lower than the hypothetical value (i.e., a value obtained before the course), (2) 'positive ranks' referring to a value that is higher than the hypothetical value, and (3) 'ties' referring to a value that is equal to the hypothetical value. In order to facilitate statistical figures obtained from Wilcoxon signed ranks test, the summary of the results is provided in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test of Knowledge, Awareness, and Skills of

      Learner Autonomy

Item	Rank	Dimension (N = 35)		
		Knowledge	*Awareness*	*Skills*
		F (%)	F (%)	F (%)
Setting learning goals	Positive ranks	29 (82.9)	29 (82.9)	30 (85.7)
	Ties	4 (11.4)	5 (14.3)	5 (14.3)
	Negative ranks	2 (5.7)	1 (2.8)	**0** (0)
Creating a study plan	Positive ranks	31 (88.6)	29 (82.9)	32 (91.4)
	Ties	4 (11.4)	5 (14.3)	3 (8.6)
	Negative ranks	0 (0)	1 (2.8)	**0** (0)
Choosing learning materials	Positive ranks	29 (82.9)	30 (85.7)	31 (88.6)
	Ties	5 (14.3)	5 (14.3)	4 (11.4)
	Negative ranks	1 (2.8)	0 (0)	**0** (0)
Self-assessing writing performance	Positive ranks	28 (80)	27 (77.1)	27 (77.1)
	Ties	7 (20)	8 (22.9)	8 (22.9)
	Negative ranks	0 (0)	0 (0)	**0** (0)
Writing reflections	Positive ranks	28 (80)	30 (85.7)	28 (80)
	Ties	7 (20)	5 (14.3)	7 (20)
	Negative ranks	0 (0)	0 (0)	**0** (0)

Statistically, Table 4.2 demonstrated some items containing 'negative ranks' in dimensions of *knowledge* and *awareness*; in contrast, there was no item involving 'negative ranks' in dimension of *skills*.

Concerning the dimension of *knowledge*, there are two autonomous learning tasks (e.g., setting learning goals and choosing learning materials) that contained 'negative ranks' whilst the other tasks had no 'negative ranks'. For *knowledge* of setting learning goals, there were twenty-nine for 'positive ranks', four for 'ties', and two for 'negative ranks'. That is, two participants (5.7%) reported that they gained less

knowledge of setting learning goals than before; four participants (11.4%) revealed that their knowledge did not have any changes after the course; and the rest (82.9%) believed that their knowledge was more or less improved. Apart from background knowledge of learner autonomy introduced at the beginning of the course by the teacher, one of the two participants had gained knowledge of learning goals from her aunt and uncle when she was young. As for *knowledge* of choosing learning materials, there were twenty-nine for 'positive ranks', five for 'ties', and one for 'negative ranks'. One participant (2.8%) thought that her knowledge of choosing learning materials was not good enough as she did not know where to search for materials and how to choose them properly.

As far as the dimension of *awareness* is concerned, there were also two autonomous learning tasks (e.g., setting learning goals and creating a study plan) which included 'negative ranks'. For *awareness* of setting learning goals, there were twenty-nine for 'positive ranks', five for 'ties', and one for 'negative ranks' for *awareness* of setting learning goals. This means that twenty-nine participants (82.9%) raised awareness of setting learning goals, and five of them (14.3%) felt that their awareness of setting learning goals remained unchanged. Especially, one participant (2.8%) stated that she paid less attention to learning goals than before. She explained that she had to simultaneously take a variety of courses in one term, so she did not have enough time to set her own learning goals. Regarding *awareness* of creating a study plan, likewise, there was one respondent (2.8%) who did not like to create a study plan much despite the fact that she had previously been aware of these. When asked about this matter in the interview, she further reported that she set a detailed study plan and tried to follow it strictly. When reflecting what she gained, she found that she could not complete it as

she expected. She added, "I sometimes set difficult goals that may be beyond my ability or a specific study plan, thus I cannot reach them. That makes me disappointed" (SI6).

With respect to the dimension of *skills*, however, all autonomous learning tasks did not contain 'negative ranks'. For example, the results indicated thirty for 'positive ranks' and five for 'ties' for *skills* of setting learning goals. This means that the majority of participants (85.7%) thought that they were able to set learning goals better than before, whereas five participants (14.3%) stated that their skill of setting learning goals stayed the same. Not only could they set learning goals, but they were also able to do other autonomous learning tasks like creating a study plan, choosing learning materials, self-assessing writing performance, and writing reflections on their learning better than before. Especially, there were no participants who stated that their autonomous learning skills deteriorated after they attended this writing course.

Further, qualitative data gathered from the questionnaire with open-ended items and the semi-structured interview provided some possible justification for the development of learner autonomy. Most of the participants made a comparison between the previous and current learning. They admitted that they previously focused most on grades and knowledge that teachers provided them as SQ30 stated, "[w]hen I was young, I learned lessons that the teacher provides by heart to get good marks…".

In terms of instruction, only a few participants asserted that their awareness of self-study had been created since they were in high school through teachers' instruction and family members' discussions; however, the participants were not certain about the way to learn autonomously effectively.

> I had created a study plan when I was preparing for the graduation exam and entrance exam, but it was just like a timetable… (SI4).

My aunt and uncle guided me how to learn independently and gave me reasons why I should learn independently when I was in high school. However, some parts (e.g., creating a study plan, reflecting on my learning, choosing learning materials, etc.) the teacher has mentioned in this course are new and helpful to me (SQ15).

In relation to teaching materials, moreover, the respondents had once relied heavily on materials which teachers introduced or provided and believed that it was not necessary to have supplementary materials for a writing course. In the same way, assessment had been assumed to be teachers' responsibility. Especially, none of them had heretofore experienced reflection on their learning before the course as SI10 commented:

I created a timetable. I set time for each subject a day. However, I did not look back to what I had learned because of limited time. I did not compare what I had learned with the predetermined timetable (SI10).

On the contrary, the participants' knowledge, awareness, and skills of learner autonomy were considerably raised after the writing course. Specifically, they paid more attention to their own learning than before and was currently able to set learning goals, to create a study plan, to choose learning materials, to assess their writing, and to reflect on their learning.

Learning Goals

The respondents reported that they first found it useful to set themselves learning goals suitable for their ability which motivated them to achieve success in the learning process. They set both long-term goals (for the whole course) and short-term goals (for each unit) with different focuses as SQ23 explained:

The long-term goals help me to know my ultimate purpose for this course, which gives me great motivation for learning. Meanwhile, short-term goals provide me with specific ways to follow. Both types of goals are important to me. I often try to complete short- term goals to achieve long-term goals then.

Study Plans

In addition to setting learning goals, they were able to create a proper study plan in which they could set the period of time for a task, choose specific learning strategies and methods, and choose suitable materials to achieve their learning goals. For instance, SI7 revealed that her aim was to improve her knowledge and not to just focus on grades anymore. Accordingly, she was able to arrange times for practice and choose appropriate materials to acquire the knowledge she needed.

Learning Materials

Concerning learning materials, apart from the textbook, the participants looked for different sources, such as online learning (e.g., Facebook, YouTube, Google, VOA, CNN, etc.), offline learning (e.g., library, newspapers, reference books, CDs, etc.), and/or human resources (e.g., seniors, friends, teachers, foreigners, etc.).

I sometimes go to AC (American Center) in district One. It's the library belonging to Consulate General of the United States in Vietnam. It has lots of books, CDs, stories, newspapers… (SI4).

I occasionally visit VOA (Voice of America) website to listen to different topics like politics, economics, society, etc. I also visit the websites of CNN and New York Times to learn new words. I can get more ideas from these (SI8).

Self-assessment

The participants' awareness was considerably raised as SQ22 admitted, "I absolutely believed in teacher assessment before, but now I realize that self-assessment

is important". Indeed, the respondents were able to determine their actual writing competence while they were scoring their writing because "self-assessment helps [them] to recognize mistakes, and [they] can learn from the mistakes" (SQ20). She suggested that self-assessment should be promoted and encouraged in an autonomous classroom.

Reflection

One of the steps the respondents had never done before the course was writing reflections. Given the quantitative data collected from the questionnaire with closed-ended items (see Table 4.1), however, knowledge, awareness, and skills of 'writing reflections' were rated highest of all. The quantitative data were actually confirmed by the qualitative data. The majority of respondents realized the benefits of 'writing reflections' for their autonomous learning, like keeping track of the learning process, increasing their learning awareness, and taking control over their own learning.

The qualitative result showed that there was a clear distinction in one of the most outstanding autonomous learning tasks, writing reflections, between before and after the course. They revealed the truth that previously they had never set their learning goals and reflected on their learning until this writing course asked them to evaluate their learning process. In other words, it was the first time they had experienced writing reflections. Reflections were one part of the writing log (see Appendix D), which was introduced by the teacher at the beginning of the course. The writing log could be seen as a learner journal in which they jotted down everything that happened during their learning process. However, a writing log in this case, in which the participants could set their learning goals and times, identify specific learning methods to achieve the goals, and most importantly reflect on what they had achieved (every week, every two

weeks, or every month) compared to their predetermined goals, seemed to be more logical than a journal. Noticeably, the sample writing log introduced by the teacher played a role as a guideline rather than a fixed form, thus they had more freedom and creativity to create their own logs to reflect on their learning more effectively.

Apart from the qualitative data generated from the questionnaire with open-ended items and semi-structured interview, the qualitative data obtained from portfolio assessment provided more evidence of learner autonomy development. As presented in section 3.7.3, a portfolio was developed in this study with the three autonomy-related components, including collection, selection, and reflection. Therefore, these components were analyzed to assess the gradual development of learner autonomy.

Firstly, the participants were gradually able to collect artifacts to support their writing. In the first unit, more than two-thirds of the participants (68.6%) still followed the teacher's guide because they did not know how and why to collect artifacts. This means that 32.4% of them may know how to search for artifacts for their learning. However, most of the participants (85.7%) could look for some artifacts from different sources with the help of the teacher in the next two units in which learners were given more freedom to take control of their learning. More specifically, they only consulted the teacher when they were uncertain about the usefulness of the artifacts. This means that they were able to search for the materials by themselves, yet they could not self-determine whether or not these materials were useful to their writing. In the last two units in which the participants were encouraged to be autonomous learners, the majority of participants (94.3%) could look for and use the most suitable artifacts to enrich their writing on their own. They did not even ask the teacher for a help because they felt confident enough to collect the best artifacts for their writing.

Secondly, the participants knew how to choose the best drafts and artifacts to show the development of their writing skill. In the first unit, for example, all of the participants put all writing drafts and artifacts which they wrote and searched for without a specific categorization in the portfolio. It can be interpreted that they viewed the portfolio as a folder which contained the documents. In the next two units, more than half of the participants (54.3%) were able to organize the writing drafts (e.g., the first drafts with self-assessment, the revised drafts with peer assessment, and the final drafts) and some artifacts, whereas 45.7% of them only put the final drafts in the portfolio because they thought that the final drafts were the best ones. However, a large number of the participants (85.7%) purposefully put all their drafts with the artifacts used to support their writing. This means that they were aware of the necessity of the arrangement of the documents in the portfolio, and they could know how to choose the optimal drafts and artifacts to show their improvement in writing competence. For example, one respondent (SP31) stuck her father's photo into the descriptive essay of her idol. After the first draft, she self-assessed her writing using the self-assessment checklist and the writing rubric. She attached the self-assessment checklist right after the first draft. Then her peer assessed her writing using the peer assessment checklist and the writing rubric. Certainly, she attached the peer assessment checklist right after the revised draft. If she was not certain about the peers' corrections and suggestions, she could ask the teacher to cross-check the answers. Finally, she produced the last draft based on the corrections and suggestions obtained from the first and revised drafts. It can be inferred that the participants became autonomous over a period of time through the critical selection of the documents in the portfolio.

Finally, the findings collected from the participants' writing logs and their opinions on the whole course which were included in their portfolio (i.e., they reflected on what they liked and disliked about the course) showed the gradual development in their reflective skill. Contrary to the perfunctory reflections written in the first unit, several participants could reflect on their learning achievements in detail in the next two units and the last two units (71.4% and 85.7%, respectively) except for a minority of the participants who briefly reflected on their achievements by some single words such as "good" "done" or "incomplete". More importantly, they learned some lessons when they wrote reflections and make improvement little by little. For example, one of the three learning goals that SP24 set for the first week was learning seventy new words for IELTS in a week (i.e., ten words per day). Her strategy was to learn them by heart by writing them down over and over again. After a week, she reflected on her learning and realized that she could memorize twenty out of seventy new words. She also wrote down the reason that she procrastinated was due to laziness. She then suggested the solutions for the following week that she ought to be more serious carrying out the study plan and even punish herself by not going out with friends on the weekend. It can be concluded that the participants' reflective skill was developed throughout the course. This means that the participants gradually became autonomous through the conscious reflections.

In sum, the results indicate that the PLAD model helped to develop learner autonomy in terms of *knowledge*, *awareness*, and *skills* after the 15-week writing course in spite of some differences in the lowest rated tasks and ranks among them. Noticeably, *awareness* of learner autonomy was rated highest of the three dimensions, and 'writing reflections' was rated highest of the five autonomous learning tasks.

Table 4.3 Summary of Overall and Detailed Results of Three Dimensions of

   Learner Autonomy

	Knowledge	*Awareness*	*Skills*
QUANTITATIVE DATA	**Overall results** • Similar improvements ('writing reflections' – the highest rated task) • A significant difference in terms of learner autonomy development between 'before the course' and 'after the course' **Detailed results** • Difference in the lowest rated tasks		
	Task: 'choosing learning materials'	*Task*: 'creating a study plan'	*Task*: 'self-assessing writing pieces'
	• Difference in ranks		
	Containing 'negative ranks' for 'setting learning goals' and 'choosing learning materials'	Containing 'negative ranks' for 'setting learning goals' and 'creating a study plan'	Containing no 'negative ranks'
	Knowledge	*Awareness*	*Skills*
QUALITATIVE DATA	**Before the course**	**After the course**	
	Focusing on grades	Identifying clear purposes through setting learning goals	
	Gaining knowledge directly through the teacher	Actively taking control over learning through creating a study plan with specific strategies	
	Being unsure about learner autonomy	Understanding the nature and implementation of learner autonomy	
	Relying on materials provided by the teacher	Looking for and choosing learning materials	
	Not writing reflections	Reflecting and comparing achievements with learning goals	
	Consisting of one type of assessment: Teacher assessment	Consisting of three types of assessment: Self-assessment, peer assessment, and teacher assessment	

4.1.2 Learners' Writing Competence and Strategies

Research question #2: Does the PLAD model help to develop learners' writing competence during the course? If so, how? Which writing strategies are the most preferred by the learners?

This section provides data analysis of writing competence development and writing strategies that answers the second research question. The results obtained from the mid-term and final writing tests were first analyzed quantitatively using the paired samples t-test and descriptive statistics (frequencies/percentages). Then the qualitative data obtained from the questionnaire with open-ended items and semi-structured interview were analyzed to confirm the quantitative data.

4.1.2.1 Writing Competence Development

The results obtained from the paired samples t-test between the mid-term scores and final scores indicate that the participants' writing competence was improved after the writing course because of the PLAD model. Specifically, the p-value was statistically smaller than the level of significance ($p = .015 < .05$); that is, the null hypothesis stating that there was no significant difference between the mid-term and final writing tests was rejected. In other words, there was a significant difference between them. It was also statistically found that the mean score of the final test ($\bar{X} = 6.97$) was considerably higher than that of the mid-term test ($\bar{X} = 6.53$), and the standard deviation of the final mean score (SD = .81) was lower than that of the mid-term mean score (SD = 1.16) (i.e., a standard deviation close to zero indicates that the data tends to be very close to the <u>mean</u>). That is, in comparison with the mid-term scores, those achieved in the final test tended to be impressively higher. These results indicate a considerable increase in writing competence in a comparison of what the participants

achieved after the course when compared with what they achieved before the course. In fact, a great number of the participants agreed that their writing competence had improved, as SQ1 said, "I have learned many things in this course, especially my writing skill is considerably improved".

Table 4.4 Frequency of Mid-term and Final Scores

Level	Score	Writing test (N = 35)			
		Mid-term test		Final test	
		F	%	F	%
Excellent	9.0	0	0	1	2.9
	8.5	1	2.9	0	0
Good	8.0	4	11.4	5	14.3
	7.5	6	17.1	5	14.3
	7.0	5	14.3	12	34.3
Fair	6.5	7	20	8	22.8
	6.0	3	8.6	2	5.7
	5.5	3	8.6	0	0
Average	5.0	4	11.4	2	5.7
	4.0	2	5.7	0	0
Total		35	100	35	100

Moreover, it can be seen from the data in Table 4.4 that the participants' mid-term scores varied more than their final scores. Obviously, there were nine band scores for the mid-term test (4.0, 5.0, 5.5, 6.0, 6.5, 7.0, 7.5, 8.0, and 8.5) while fewer band scores (5.0, 6.0, 6.5, 7.0, 7.5, 8.0, and 9.0) were found in the final test. It is noted that these bands were categorized into four levels in the following descending order: Excellent (e.g., bands 8.5 and 9.0), good (e.g., bands 70, 7.5, and 8.0), fair (e.g., bands 5.5, 6.0, and 6.5), and average (e.g., bands 4.0 and 5.0). More specifically, the same

percentage of excellent scores (2.9%) was found in the mid-term and final tests in spite of the difference in the bands. For example, only one band score of 8.5 in the mid-term and only one band score of 9.0 in the final test were achieved by the same participant. The significant differences in terms of writing scores between the mid-term test and final test show a range of good scores, fair scores, and average scores. In particular, nearly half of the participants (42.8%) obtained good scores in the mid-term test, whereas up to 62.9% of them obtained good scores in the final test. As for fair scores, meanwhile, the number of the participants who received fair scores in the mid-term test (37.2%) was higher than that in the final test (28.5%). It is noticeable that the number of the participants who received average scores (e.g., bands 4.0 & 5.0) in the midterm test (17.1%) was three times higher than that in the final test (5.7%); especially, there was no score for 4.0 in the final test. In short, the participants obtained more good scores and fewer fair and average scores in the final test than in the mid-term test. This means that the participants' writing competence improved during the course.

4.1.2.2 Writing Strategies

Besides the test results, the quantitative and qualitative data on writing strategies were analyzed to find out how the participants achieved improvements in writing competence. As stated in Chapter 2, there were five writing evaluation criteria consisting of content, organization, vocabulary, language use (grammar), and mechanics. Accordingly, strategies that helped to improve these factors were introduced to the participants in the pre-training. The frequency of the strategies investigated after the 15-week writing course is shown in Table 4.5. Furthermore, the qualitative data obtained from the questionnaire with open-ended items and the semi-structured interview provided further justification for the aforementioned quantitative data.

In particular, gathering information was the most frequent strategy the participants used in their writing ($\overline{X} = 4.00$). That is to say, they usually searched for information for their writing. In fact, the majority of the respondents tended to recommend collecting relevant ideas from various sources. They mainly searched for information on the Internet (e.g., Google, Wikipedia, online newspapers, YouTube, VOA, Facebook, etc.), from books (e.g., textbooks & reference books), and from seniors, friends, teachers or foreigners with the aim to gain good ideas which would enrich their writing. A minority of them explained that they selected the optimal ideas when making a comparison among a variety of materials. Nonetheless, there were two respondents who did not consider gathering information as a useful step for a good piece of writing. One of them explained that if he read a lot of materials written by other authors, he might be influenced by their ideas, i.e., he could not keep his original ideas. The other revealed that she would rather invent ideas by herself than learn ideas from others.

Table 4.5 Mean Scores of Writing Strategies

Factor	Strategy	$\overline{X}$	SD
Content	Gathering information	4.00	.97
	Stopping to link and add new ideas	3.77	1.00
	Discussing with the teacher and/or friends	3.29	1.18
	Listing words and/or phrases	3.03	.89
	Translating ideas from Vietnamese into English	2.43	1.09
Organization	Following the organization available in the textbook	3.66	1.03
	Focusing on layout	3.63	.86
	Changing ideas	3.60	1.01
	Looking for reference materials	3.51	.95
	Rearranging ideas	3.31	.99
Vocabulary	Looking up new words	3.91	1.12
	Changing words	3.86	.91
	Using collocations	2.97	.95
	Using synonyms and/or antonyms	2.89	.90
	Using idioms and/or phrases	2.77	.60
Language use	Making a good statement	4.17	.75
	Checking grammar regularly	3.91	.89
	Using transition markers	3.49	.78
	Copying good structures	3.20	.83
	Using complex structures	2.50	.75
Mechanics	Changing words	3.69	1.08
	Checking spelling manually	3.40	1.09
	Peer review	3.26	.96
	Dictation	3.17	.92
	Checking spelling on PC	2.34	1.26

Another strategy frequently employed in their writing was linking ideas ($\overline{X}$ = 3.77). That is, the participants frequently stopped writing for a moment and linked ideas or even added new ideas because most of them believed that it made their writing more consistent, logical, and coherent. Also, this probably helped to avoid any misunderstandings or missing ideas. Conversely, few respondents followed this method as they felt it consumed their time and interrupted their flow of ideas.

In addition, the participants discussed their ideas with their teachers and friends once in a while ($\overline{X}$ = 3.29) or listed words and phrases relating to the topic ($\overline{X}$ = 3.03). On the one hand, several respondents occasionally asked friends for initial ideas for a topic or comments on their ideas; some just liked to deal with ideas on their own to keep them focused; and some asked for friends' or the teacher's suggestions only when they had enough time to do so or had no ideas of their own. On the other hand, the participants also listed ideas in the form of words, phrases, or even a sentence from time to time to avoid missing ideas, to brainstorm ideas, and to enrich their ideas. However, a few of them were afraid of limited time, so they often "think about ideas and write them in an essay immediately" (SQ16) or "start with an introductory paragraph without brainstorming ideas" (SQ17).

Noticeably, translation of ideas from Vietnamese into English was also necessary for the participants to get lots of ideas ($\overline{X}$ = 2.43). This means that they first jotted down ideas in Vietnamese and then translated them into English while they were producing an essay. A few of them explained that they did so because numerous ideas often came to their mind very fast, and they had difficulty expressing ideas for difficult or specialized topics in English immediately; thus, they had to note them down as

quickly as possible in their mother tongue, otherwise their ideas might have been lost. SQ5 and SQ20 revealed:

> There are some sentences which I cannot express in English immediately, so I note them down in Vietnamese and translate them later to avoid missing good ideas (SQ5).

Nevertheless, half of the respondents did not believe in translating their ideas. They argued that it was not a good strategy in terms of time. It was explained that translation may take time to first note down ideas in Vietnamese and then translate them into English. More importantly, as an English major, SQ24 believed that he should think about ideas and write them down in English. Another important point raised by the respondents was that unexpected grammatical mistakes might be caused by word-by-word translation.

In terms of strategies of organization, most of the strategies were frequently used by the participants. The findings demonstrate that the mean scores of these strategies are not significantly different. The participants were most likely to follow the organization of each essay type presented in the textbook ($\overline{X}$ = 3.66) because they simply thought that what was presented in the textbook would be correct and in standard English. They also focused more on the layout or format of an essay which contained indentation, spacing, paragraphing, margins, title, and so on ($\overline{X}$ = 3.63). Only few respondents stated that they tended to put more emphasis on content or ideas than the format of an essay, while the rest argued that a good format for an essay may make the essay more readable as a result of its logic and coherence. Additionally, the respondents often looked for reference materials for good essay organization ($\overline{X}$ = 3.51). Most of them wanted to learn essay organization from others through sample essays. For example, SQ3 reported that she could save time for organizing an essay because she learned about it from others' sample essays. Also, they often changed ideas ($\overline{X}$ = 3.60)

or rearranged ideas ($\overline{X}$ = 3.31) in order to make their writing better-organized. The ultimate purpose of these strategies was to make the structure of an essay clear to the readers. However, there may be some limitations, for example, such as not keeping to the topic or a lack of time if ideas are changed or rearranged while writing. In general, it was felt that a good outline could be an initial step for a well-organized essay as SQ15 reported:

> I make an outline from the beginning so that I am not worried about the organization anymore (SQ15).

As far as vocabulary strategies are concerned, the participants were most likely to look for the meaning and spelling of new words in a dictionary ($\overline{X}$ = 3.91). A large number of the respondents agreed that they looked new words up to widen their lexical range, i.e., they were able to learn new words for expressing ideas. Some of them checked a new word immediately, whereas others used Vietnamese words temporarily and then looked for the equivalent English words in a dictionary afterwards.

> I generally finish my writing with some Vietnamese words which I do not know in Vietnamese and then looked them up in the dictionary for English words in order to avoid interrupting my thinking process (SQ13).

In contrast, a few respondents decided to use simple words rather than challenging ones for the whole essay or to change a challenging word into a simpler one. Similarly, they usually changed ambiguous words to make their writing clearer ($\overline{X}$ = 3.86) to avoid confusion or misunderstandings. There was only one respondent (SQ32) who did not change words while writing because she often brainstormed vocabulary before writing to save time. Sometimes, the respondents also used collocations to enrich their writing ($\overline{X}$ = 2.97). It is presumed that collocations mostly

helped them to enrich their writing and increase its accuracy, yet a few of them only used them minimally in their writing. A couple of respondents did not even notice whether or not they had used collocations in their writing. Meanwhile, synonyms or antonyms and idioms or phrases were rarely used in their writing ($\overline{X}$ = 2.89, $\overline{X}$ = 2.77, respectively), although students would have liked to use them to enrich their lexical range (i.e., avoiding repeated words). The major reason for the low use of these strategies reported in the questionnaire may have been their limited knowledge of idioms or phrases and synonyms or antonyms which is one of the students' weaknesses. Therefore, they endeavored to improve their vocabulary. From the information written by the participants in the writing logs, all of them spent most of their time improving their vocabulary, especially academic lexical range, idioms, and collocations. This means that they put great emphasis on improving vocabulary. The most common strategy they used to learn vocabulary was to words by heart by writing them down on a piece of paper repeatedly and then reading them out to practice their pronunciation as well. Another strategy which was frequently employed was making sentences with a new word, a phrase, or an idiom. Other participants reported some interesting strategies to learn new vocabulary, such as sticking notes with new words on the wall or writing new words on the palms of their hands to see them easily or reviewing new words wherever they happened to be, for example, on the bus, at school, at home, or at the gym.

> I learn and remember new words by writing them on the palms of my hands because I can see them easily when necessary (SI9).

With reference to strategies of language use, the participants frequently made a good statement itself before producing another one ($\overline{X}$ = 4.17). That is, they tried to

complete sentences in an essay, one by one. The advocates explained that making good statements would save their time for editing. Contrary to this common belief, a small proportion of the respondents had the opposite idea. They argued that they probably wasted lots of time to complete an essay if they frequently stopped to correct each sentence. Instead, they kept on writing the essay until the end and then edited it afterwards. Furthermore, the participants seemed to regularly check their grammar by reading and rereading their writing and finding as many mistakes as possible ($\overline{X} = 3.91$). In order to increase the cohesion of their writing, they often used transition markers, mainly prepositions and conjunctions to create connections within a sentence and between sentences ($\overline{X} = 3.49$). Also, they tried to learn good structures from different resources (e.g., books, articles, seniors, stories, fairy tales) and then applied them in their writing with the aim to improve their language use in particular and their writing in general ($\overline{X} = 3.20$). SQ2 explained, "I use some good English structures I have learned from different sources in my writing when I do not know how to express my ideas in English". Most of the students had the same idea, thus they tried to note down good structures in a notebook for later use. However, they avoided using complex structures ($\overline{X} = 2.50$). Fear of making grammatical mistakes may be the most common reason for this. However, a small number of students tried using complex structures to improve their writing in terms of grammatical range as noted by SQ18:

It is not a good idea to use too many complex structures in a writing piece. Sometimes, I use some complex statements to emphasize outstanding points (SQ18).

Regarding the strategies of mechanics, most of them decided to delete or change words if they were unsure about the spelling ($\overline{X} = 3.69$). They were really afraid of

making mistakes which might worsen the quality of their writing. Similar to their strategies of language use, the participants preferred checking spelling manually using a dictionary ($\bar{X}$ = 3.40) to using AutoCorrect options in Microsoft Word ($\bar{X}$ = 2.34). Another commonly employed strategy was dictation. They practiced their spelling through dictation with friends from time to time ($\bar{X}$ = 3.17), for example, they dictated a short passage to their peers outside of class. In class, they asked their peers to review their writing for spelling ($\bar{X}$ = 3.26). Several respondents found it useful to let their peers check their spelling mistakes as SQ25 admitted, "[m]y friends can help me find out spelling mistakes I cannot recognize".

To conclude, the findings demonstrate that there was a significant improvement in the writing competence of the participants which was as a result of the course no matter what strategies they used to enhance their writing. It is worth noting that vocabulary was their main concern as they all believed it to be their greatest weakness.

4.1.3 The PLAD Model

Research question #3: What are the learners' perceptions of the PLAD model? What factors contribute to their support for or resistance to promoting learner autonomy through the use of a portfolio in the writing course?

In response to the third research question regarding the participants' perceptions of the PLAD model and factors influencing their decision to continue with or drop out of the autonomous writing class using a portfolio, the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire with closed-ended items were statistically analyzed. Moreover, the qualitative data collected from the semi-structured interviews, questionnaires with open-ended items, and reflections on likes and dislikes of the course in the portfolios were employed to give support to the quantitative data.

4.1.3.1 Learners' Perceptions of the PLAD Model

This section presents an analysis of the participants' perceptions of the necessity of the steps in the PLAD model and their opinions on whether or not they liked to use a portfolio in a writing course to develop their autonomous learning. Based on the data collected, overall, most of the participants showed positive attitudes toward the PLAD model. In particular, there were seven autonomy-related steps of the PLAD model (e.g., setting learning goals, choosing learning materials, conducting teacher assessment, creating a study plan, writing reflections, conducting self-assessment, and conducting peer assessment) that need to be discussed in detail.
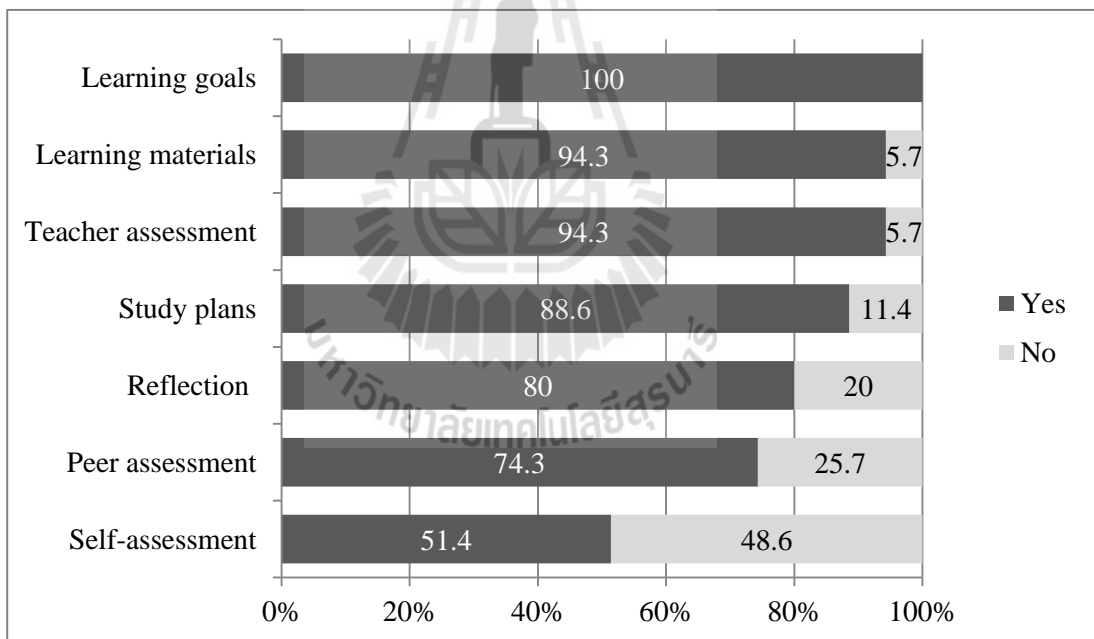
Figure 4.1 Learners' perceptions of the PLAD model steps

Firstly, as illustrated in Figure 4.1, all of the participants (100%) believed that 'setting learning goals' would enable them to learn autonomously. According to them,

this step really brought several benefits, such as a clear picture of the course, proper time arrangement, and high motivation.

> When I set learning goals, I try to achieve them and reduce spare time for nonsense activities like hanging out or surfing Facebook (SI2).

> I can choose suitable learning materials based on predetermined learning goals and arrange time for my learning properly (SI5).

Secondly, the majority of participants (94.3%) viewed 'choosing learning materials' and 'conducting teacher assessment' as factors that may help develop learner autonomy. For 'choosing learning materials', the majority of those who responded to the questionnaire with open-ended items felt interested in choosing and sharing materials with each other. For instance, SQ17 revealed that she discovered a new method in which she could look for materials for the presentation and written work and share these with her group members, which motivated her learning. Similarly, as far as teacher assessment was concerned, the participants relied predominantly on the teacher's feedback and scores for their writing pieces because they simply felt more positive about teacher assessment than peer assessment or self-assessment.

Thirdly, 'creating a study plan' was another noticeable factor chosen by a large proportion of the participants (88.6%). As a matter of fact, the majority of them believed in this step for its own sake, except some interviewees reported feeling it was a hindrance. According to these interviewees, either too specific plans or general ones were likely to cause problems. For example, SI6 disclosed that she set three hours from 8 p.m. to 11 p.m. for Writing III, but she actually spent only one hour on this subject. Consequently, she felt disappointed with herself and even the plan because she did not achieve the goals. On the contrary, SI5 had difficulties with a general study plan. He

admitted that his study plan first looked like a timetable and he could not keep doing the tasks in the plan over a week because it was too general. He further stated that he got stuck all the time as there were no clear purposes or methods; therefore, he could not be sure to what extent he achieved his goals. In order to solve this problem, a suggestion made by SI7 seemed to be a good solution.

> I agree that we should not create a study plan that is neither too detailed nor too general. For example, I set three hours a day for French, but I do not set a fixed time (e.g., from 8 p.m. to 11 p.m.). I can flexibly spend time studying French as long as I ensure the amount of time I predetermined (SI7).

Fourthly, 80% of the respondents viewed 'writing reflections' as a factor influencing learner autonomy development. Several of them advocated that the main aim of writing reflections was to compare the achievements and predetermined learning goals to identify how much they achieved the goals and which problems they encountered during the learning process.

> Through comparison between what I have achieved with the predetermined study plan, I can find out strengths as well as weaknesses and try to solve them (SI4).

In addition, a large number of the respondents (74.3%) stated that 'conducting peer assessment' more or less enabled them to learn autonomously. That is, when they completed a writing piece, their peers helped them to find the mistakes that they could not recognize for themselves and to grade their writing. In addition, they felt more relaxed to discuss and share with peers than the teacher. In contrast, a few respondents expressed their disappointments over their peers' corrections. Because of different levels of writing competence, they did not generally obtain useful feedback and comments from their peers to improve their writing. Especially, SI8 revealed that she

was irritated because some of her friends corrected their peers' writing perfunctorily. Perhaps for this reason, some students appeared not to trust their peers' assessments.

Finally, 'conducting self-assessment' was assumed to play a minor role in developing learner autonomy by more than half of those surveyed (51.4%). In contrast, a small proportion of the respondents revealed that they felt bored with rereading their writing for in order to find mistakes and grading it because some were afraid of finding mistakes or some that they could not even recognize mistakes. More importantly, they were not confident about their assessment ability because they revealed that they had never graded their writing before, as SQ7 confessed, "I think I do not have enough ability to assess my writing on the basis of standard criteria".

Additionally, when asked whether the participants would like to employ a portfolio in an EFL writing course to develop learner autonomy, a large number of the participants (63%) agreed that a portfolio was useful in a writing course. This means that the students recognized the benefits of the portfolio in the writing course. However, 26% of them felt unsure about its usefulness, and a small proportion of participants (11%) did not like to use a portfolio in the writing course. These students felt that they would encounter difficulties in employing a portfolio during the writing course, which explains their reluctance.

4.1.3.2 Supportive Factors and Constraints toward the PLAD Model

The main purpose of this section is to find out the supportive factors and constraints affecting the development of learner autonomy in a portfolio-based writing course. The findings obtained from the questionnaire with open-ended items, semi-structured interview, and documents in the portfolios demonstrated two opposing viewpoints: Supportive factors and constraints.

4.1.3.2.1 Supportive Factors

Advocates provided evidence of supportive factors that benefited them throughout the course. The supportive factors, which emerged from the qualitative data reported by the participants, included developed skills and awareness of learner autonomy, positive feedback on the use of portfolio, necessity of collaborative learning, non-threatening learning atmosphere, and teacher's autonomy-oriented role.

Developed Skills and Awareness of Learner Autonomy

The fact that learners' skills and awareness of autonomous learning increased during the course provides clear evidence for the effectiveness of the PLAD model. In fact, several participants confirmed that their autonomous learning in terms of knowledge, awareness, and skills had improved by the end of the writing course. Moreover, they knew what learner autonomy was and how autonomous learning tasks were implemented in their writing class; their awareness and skills of autonomous learning increased accordingly as shown below.

I understand learner autonomy more. I am able to write an essay and then assess it on my own […] I think I should spend more time and efforts on learning (SQ4).

I can learn autonomously effectively now because I determine that learning is my business, not dealing with the teacher (SQ27).

The participants further attributed their learner autonomy development to freedom. In this sense, they had plenty of freedom to do tasks which really motivated their learning during this course. Seven out of ten interviewees (70%) shared the same idea that they were free to search for and choose learning materials appropriate for their writing or presentation. They also confessed that if they were not sure about the

appropriateness of the materials, they would ask the teacher for counseling in class or through the Facebook group in which they could share materials with each other or discuss confusing matters with the teacher and/or classmates. Besides the choice of learning materials, the participants were able to do other tasks like setting learning goals, creating a study plan, self-assessing their own writing, and reflecting on their learning progress as stated in the following extracts.

> Apart from how to write an essay with different types, I know how to create a study plan, self-assess my own writing, and reflect my learning process (SQ33).

> This course is so interesting with necessary skills, such as setting learning goals, choosing materials, creating a study plan, and writing reflections on my learning. More importantly, I can do these skills confidently and may apply them into my future courses (SQ2).

Positive Feedback on the Use of Portfolio

Portfolios were judged to be a useful learning tool by the participants. This was actually the first time they had experienced using a portfolio as a learning tool during a course. A portfolio in this case did not simply function as a folder which only contained documents. It included writing papers, relevant materials for reference, especially a writing log in which a participant set learning goals, created a study plan with specific implementation strategies and reflected on their learning in comparison with the predetermined learning goals. As a result, they knew how to choose the most appropriate documents to put in a portfolio and how to classify documents in a portfolio to show their progress in writing.

In the light of the qualitative data obtained from the questionnaire with open-ended items, semi-structured interview, and portfolio assessment, it was reported that

the portfolios generally helped the particpants to keep and find documents easily, to keep track of learning, and to organize their own learning schedule.

> The portfolio helps me to keep the documents. I can find the necessary documents easily because I put them according to the topic (SQ19).

Given the portfolio assessment conducted by the teacher researcher and one of her colleagues, it is apparent that the participants were able to choose and organize the documents for their portfolios. Most of the portfolios contained four components: Writing drafts, writing logs, artifacts, and documents related to the course (e.g., the course description, the writing assessment rubric, the list of writing strategies, etc.), which were classified according to each element or each unit. Of these components, artifacts, writing drafts and writing logs were probably seen as the most vital components, whereas the documents relating to the course were sometimes not included in the portfolios. Specifically, the writing drafts, which consisted of the first drafts, the assessed ones, the revised ones, and the final ones throughout the course showed constant improvement in the participants' writing ability. Meanwhile, the writing logs indicated learner autonomy development and the specific ways the participants employed to enhance their writing skills. It is, additionally, noteworthy that the third component, the artifacts, found in their portfolios were photos, a short story, sample essays, and newspapers, which were used for supporting their writing. The last component, the documents relating to the course, may have been considered optional because they stated that these documents did not seem to affect their writing performance much.

Necessity of Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning which was comprised of presentation and peer review in this study partly contributed to the development of the participants' autonomous learning. Presentation was considered to be necessary and interesting. Some believed that their presentation skills improved because of the in-class presentations. For their own presentations, they had an opportunity to look for relevant information and to discuss it with the group members. They were able to learn a lot from the discussions or arguments and feedback given by the classmates and the teacher. Through listening to other presentations, they learned not only the content the presenters conveyed to them but also the ways to give an effective presentation or design good PowerPoint slides.

Some presentations are very interesting and useful. I learn the presentation skills from some friends. They are very confident (SI10).

When we prepared for our presentation, we sometimes argued with each other. However, we found out the solution to the problem after the argument (SI1).

Similarly, the peer reviews helped them to learn about their strong points or weak points from their peers and to widen their knowledge when they exchanged papers for assessment. Another reason for supporting peer reviews was that the participants felt that it was more relaxing to discuss their work with their peers rather than their teacher.

Non-threatening Learning Atmosphere

The majority of participants affirmed that the learning atmosphere was comfortable and pressure-free. Some admitted that it was the good relationship between the teacher and the students and/or between the students that created such a comfortable learning atmosphere. Some believed that it was the result of more freedom to express

their ideas, to show creativity, and to make decisions on relevant issues of learning, such as materials, learning methods, practice, etc. as one respondent reported,"[c]reative ideas and exciting activities are the things I like best in this course" (SP25). Furthermore, some reported that there was no longer the pressure of grades which put a burden on the participants. Despite these different ideas, the participants had positive feelings toward learning. This may have resulted in positive learning outcomes.

> I really feel free and comfortable in this course because the teacher does not put pressure on students in terms of grades. Therefore, my main goal is to get as a lot knowledge as possible (SQ9).

Teacher's Autonomy-oriented Roles

In addition to the important characteristics of a teacher, like friendliness, enthusiasm, sense of humor, punctuality, and helpfulness, the participants reported a variety of roles for the teacher (e.g., a helper, a supporter, a guide, a mentor, a resource, a facilitator, and a motivator) which helped to promote learner autonomy in her classroom. According to the participants, the teacher first introduced knowledge of learner autonomy and shared the materials with them. Furthermore, she presented some important writing strategies and guided them on how to create a good study plan, which really facilitated their learning. Additionally, she tried to get the participants involved in their learning activities through presentations, peer reviews, or self-study rather than directing them what to do. When they encountered difficulties, she encouraged them to overcome their problems, and she also tried to assist them in finding solutions. Given the characteristics of these roles, in brief, these teacher roles in an autonomous classroom could be grouped into three main roles: A facilitator, a mentor, and a resource.

The role of the teacher in a classroom is very important because s/he sometimes motivates us, help us to deal with difficult problems, give us timely counseling (SP13).

4.1.3.2.2 Constraints

Despite the above-mentioned supporting viewpoint, those who had doubt about the development of learner autonomy after the writing course as well as the effectiveness of the PLAD model showed some of the limitations, namely learning behaviors, doubt about the usefulness of portfolio, disadvantages of collaborative learning, inconvenient learning conditions, and teacher as an assessor.

Learning Behaviors

Contrary to those who supported the idea that learner autonomy had developed by the end of the course, approximately half of the interviewees and a small number of the respondents attributed their unchanging autonomous learning ability to their learning behaviors. Some of them generally admitted that negative learning behavior, particularly laziness, was the greatest hindrance to effective autonomous learning. One respondent frankly confessed, "I have not got any learning progress because I am not really serious with my learning" (SQ23). More obviously, they pointed out they did not mostly do these tasks (e.g., carrying out study plans, looking for learning materials, doing assignments or homework, and making preparations for new lessons) seriously. The most commonly found reasons for not carrying out a study plan were the following.

I am still lazy and feel that a study plan does not work well for me. Therefore, I do not follow the study plan regularly (SQ14).

Even though I have a clear study plan, I do not often follow it. I think I am too lazy to complete it every two weeks (SQ32).

Some possible explanations for these views were given by the interviewees. First, they did not have any properly-determined learning methods and specific learning purposes previously, so they felt bored with their learning. Second, they did not like following a study plan or a writing log strictly as they thought that creating a study plan would take a considerable time, and if they were not able to complete the study plan, they would be disappointed. Last but not least, they were not confident about their ability. For example, SI8 explained that she really felt confused when the teacher gave her lots of freedom in choosing topics or materials for writing. SI3 added that she was not sure if the materials she chose were suitable or appropriate for her writing.

Doubt about the Usefulness of Portfolio

Regarding the drawbacks of a portfolio, a few participants complained about the high cost of a portfolio, despite the fact that the teacher encouraged them to buy one at a reasonable price. For example, they bought the portfolios, which were twice or three times more expensive than the one the teacher suggested because of their appearance and usefulness. Furthermore, they admitted that they did not really like to use a portfolio in a writing course because they did not realize its usefulness. They thought that it was somewhat time-consuming, i.e., they spent time preparing documents for the portfolio or printing out the writing log or documents they found on the Internet and putting them in the portfolio. In addition, a couple of participants honestly admitted to cheat on the documents in their portfolios. This means that they made a study plan and wrote their reflections in the writing log, although they did not actually follow the study plan or they just found some relevant documents to put in the portfolio when the teacher collected the portfolios for assessment.

In general, the use of a portfolio in the writing course was new to them. Thus, they found it quite hard to get used to making use of it. Moreover, it was the limited time that caused the cheating, i.e., they had to spend time on at least seven courses in the term besides Writing III, so they did not have enough time to do all the autonomous learning tasks, especially preparing the documents for a portfolio.

> … When I was younger, I could manage time for my learning tasks better than now because I am currently taking a lot of courses at once. To be honest, I do not have enough time for all the courses in general and the autonomous learning tasks in this course in particular (SQ15).

Disadvantages of Collaborative Learning

The major concern mentioned by the participants was the presentation in the writing course. The reasons for not wanting to make a presentation were insufficient knowledge, doubts about the quality of their presentation, and the different levels of preparation. In effect, this means that the information provided by their peer presenters was not sufficient to answer all the audience's questions. This probably caused confusion and misunderstanding. What is more, some presentations and even the presenters, according to them, were very monotonous. Finally, the presenters were responsible for everything relating to the presentation by default, whilst the audience only attended the presentation with little or no preparation and asked questions when necessary. In other words, it was the different levels of preparation required which led to the participants' dissatisfaction with the presentations.

> I do not like presentation much because only presenters focus on what they are talking, whereas others pay less attention to that lesson (SQ22).

A minor concern was associated with the peer reviews. As presented above, the participants appeared not to trust peer reviews because they thought that their peers' ability was more or less the same as theirs. It was proposed that peer review should be supported with teacher assessment to obtain optimal feedback.

Inconvenient Learning Conditions

Learning conditions were assumed to affect the students' learning attitudes. As for learning resources, they complained that their university library did not contain enough English books, novels, newspapers, or articles and they were not even allowed to check out English books. In essence, the self-access center appeared not to work since they were not allowed to use it. Hence, they needed to go downtown, but it took them about thirty minutes to commute from their home to downtown, which prevented them from going regularly. Also, there was a lack of convenient learning facilities, such as a hot classroom, tables fixed to the floor, and no available Internet access or wireless fidelity (WiFi) which caused them considerable discomfort.

> I go to the American Center in downtown to look for English materials on the weekend because my library does not have several English materials. I want to go there every day, yet my timetable is so tight (SI4).

> We would be more motivated if there was available Internet access in this building. When we do not know about anything, we can google it or search for the answer online (SP7).

Teacher as an Assessor

Concerning the teacher's role, it was expected that the teacher would be an assessor who gave them evaluations and/or suggestions on how to improve their writing. The students wanted their work assessed by the teacher because they wanted

to be sure that their writing pieces were properly evaluated by the teacher who was assumed to have experienced assessment skills and sufficient knowledge, which would be more effective than peer assessment and self-assessment.

> I trust the teacher's corrections because she has good knowledge and life experiences from which I can learn (SQ11).

In short, the results of feedback concerning the PLAD model steps and the desire to use a portfolio in an autonomous writing course were quite positive. However, the employment of a portfolio in an EFL writing course in the form of the PLAD model was rather controversial. Given the earlier-discussed factors influencing learner autonomy, it cannot be denied that the PLAD model helped the participants to develop their autonomous learning. These drawbacks, however, should be taken into consideration because "it is not suitable for Vietnamese learners who get used to the teacher-directed learning method. I cannot change my learning style easily in 15 weeks" (SQ17). The summary illustrated in Table 4.6 provides an overall picture of the participants' decisions to continue with or drop out of an autonomous writing class using a portfolio.

Table 4.6 Summary of Supportive Factors and Constraints toward the PLAD Model

Items	Supportive factors	Constraints
Personal factors (*developed skills learner autonomy*)	• Knowing what learner autonomy is and how autonomous learning tasks are applied in a writing class • Setting learning goals for future courses • Creating a study plan and managing time well • Searching for and choosing appropriate learning materials • Sharing materials with each other • Discussing confusing matters with the teacher and/or classmates • Self-assessing their own writing	

Table 4.6 Summary of Supportive Factors and Constraints toward the PLAD Model

(Cont.)

Items	Supportive factors	Constraints
Personal factors (*awareness of learner autonomy /learning behaviors*)	• Reflecting on the learning process • Actively asking the teacher for counseling • Desiring to apply them into their future courses • Determining that learning is their business	• Lacking seriousness in self-study
Academic factors (*portfolio*)	• Knowing how to choose documents deliberately to put in a portfolio • Knowing how to classify documents in a portfolio to show their writing improvements • Keeping and finding documents easily • Keeping track of learning • Self-organizing their learning schedule	• Causing cheating on documents in a portfolio • Being skeptical about its effectiveness • Being time-consuming • Being expensive • Being short of time
Academic factors (*presentations*)	• Learning from the teacher's and friends' feedback to presentations • Discussing with group members for optimal ideas • Looking for relevant information • Learning both the content conveyed to them by the presenters and ways to give an effective presentation	• Gaining insufficient knowledge because of bad presentations • Causing different levels of preparation among learners
Academic factors (*peer assessment*)	• Learning either the strong points or the weak points from peers and widening knowledge when they exchanged papers for assessment • Being more relaxed to discuss with peers than the teacher	• Feeling doubtful about peers' abilities
External factors (*learning atmosphere/ learning conditions*)	• Having a good interaction with the teacher and friends • Showing creativity • Freely expressing ideas • Making decisions on relevant issues of learning, such as materials, learning styles, practice, etc. • Not studying under pressure of grades	• Providing insufficient learning resources • Lacking convenient facilities
External factors (*teacher's roles*)	• Introducing knowledge of learner autonomy • Sharing the materials with learners • Presenting necessary writing strategies • Guiding how to create a good study plan • Getting learners involved in their learning activities through presentations, peer assessment, or self-study • Encouraging learners to overcome difficult situations through their own experience • Assisting learners in finding the solutions	• Giving feedback to and/or suggestions for students' writing

4.2 Discussions on Research Findings

This section discusses the significant developments in learner autonomy as a result of using the PLAD model, writing competence development and writing strategies with the PLAD model, different levels of contribution of the PLAD model steps to learner autonomy development, and noteworthy factors influencing the application of the PLAD model in an EFL writing class.

4.2.1 Significant Development of Learner Autonomy with the PLAD model

Following the results reported in section 4.1.1, a summary of learner autonomy development with the application of the PLAD model, a discussion on the influence of the PLAD model on learner autonomy development and a discussion on the development patterns of learner autonomy will shed light on the development of learner autonomy during the course.

4.2.1.1 Summary of Learner Autonomy Development

Overall, according to the results, the participants' autonomous learning improved significantly. Autonomous learning will be discussed with reference to *knowledge*, *awareness*, and *skills*. Specifically, the p-values of these dimensions before and after the course were .000, which were less smaller than .001. This means that there was a significant difference in terms of *knowledge*, *awareness*, and *skills* in learner autonomy before and after the course. Moreover, there was a considerable increase in the mean scores of these dimensions after the course compared with those before the course. This shows that the participants became more autonomous in their learning. The qualitative results further provided possible explanations for these developments in learner autonomy. Arising out of the quantitative and qualitative analyses of these aspects of learner autonomy, it is shown that learner autonomy significantly improved

as a result of the 15-week writing. A detailed discussion on the development of learner autonomy is provided below.

4.2.1.2 The Influence of the PLAD Model on Learner Autonomy Development

The discussion on learner autonomy development with the use of the PLAD model is based on the comparison with Benson's (2001) definition. To become an autonomous learner, according to Benson, a learner needs to possess self-management skills, cognitive processes, and learning content. The findings of the current study demonstrate that the most outstanding issues (e.g., writing reflections and awareness of learner autonomy) are associated with the aspect of cognitive processes, whereas the most challenging issue (e.g., self-assessing writing performance) is related to the aspect of learning management. Concerning the aspect of learning content (e.g., choosing learning materials), the findings indicate that the participants were able to achieve their learning tasks, yet there were some limitations which prevented complete mastery.

Awareness of Learner Autonomy

The increase in awareness of learner autonomy as a result of the course is an interesting finding in this study. Of the three dimensions of *knowledge, awareness,* and *skills* of learner autonomy, in particular, the result shows that the dimension of *awareness* increased the most. In fact, the students were aware that they should carry out their autonomous learning tasks in order to be proactive in their learning through the use of a portfolio. More importantly, it was determined that learning was their responsibility and not the teacher's, which was different from what they had previously believed before they attended this writing course. In this respect, Nunan (1997) points

out that awareness is the first of five levels of implementation of learner autonomy. This means that if a learner wishes to be an autonomous learner, s/he first needs to be aware of what and how s/he is going to learn. In a similar vein, Benson (2001) believes that conscious direction is the beginning of control over learning. Thus, it can be inferred that because the participants were willing to learn autonomously, they were subsequently able to develop their autonomous learning skills in a portfolio-based writing class.

The findings from previous studies of learners' awareness of learner autonomy (e.g., Balçıkanlı, 2010; Haseborg, 2012) reveal similar results to that of the current study. In particular, the students' positive attitudes or greater awareness of autonomous learning resulted in more positive behavior. For example, Haseborg (2010) points out that the majority of the student participants reacted very positively to an autonomous learning environment. In this study, additionally, learner attitudes or awareness of autonomous learning may be positively correlated with responsibility. This result was also found in some research projects (e.g., Hobrom, 2004; Ismail & Yusof, 2012; Mineishi, 2010; Sakai, Takagi, & Chu, 2005). The results of these studies indicate that the participants (e.g., students and/or teachers) were willing and able to take responsibility for their own learning. For example, both Taiwanese students and teachers in Hobrom's (2004) study showed positive reactions to learner autonomy in EFL conversation classrooms and great expectation of taking more responsibilities in their forthcoming EFL classrooms in comparison with their current ones. This must be due to the fact that they realized the necessity of learner autonomy in EFL conversation classrooms in particular and in their learning process in general. It can be seen that the development of learner responsibility may help promote levels of autonomy because

several researchers (Dickinson, 1987; Macaro, 1997; Nunan, 1997; Scharle & Szabó, 2000) assert that learner responsibility is closely interrelated with learner autonomy.

Writing Reflections: The Most Developed Skill

In addition to increased awareness of learner autonomy, writing reflections was recognized as the highest rated task of all. Statistically, among five autonomous learning tasks (e.g., setting learning goals, creating a study plan, selecting learning materials, conducting self-assessment, and writing reflections), the mean scores of writing reflections were the highest rated task in terms of *knowledge, awareness,* and *skills*. This means that the participants acknowledged the benefits of writing reflections in autonomous learning and believed that they were able to reflect on their learning achievement best of all, although writing reflections had not previously been perceived and experienced as a learning task. This positive finding can be explained by the fact that the participants self-evaluated their learning process through a comparison of their achievements with their predetermined study plans because "reflection is often associated with the ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate one's (language) learning as a process and product" (Schwienhorst, 2009, p. 93). They then made some suggestions for improvements in their writing logs after each unit and kept them in the portfolios. Not only is reflection associated with the ability to self-manage their learning, but it is a leading component in the cognitive processes which underlie learning self-management (Benson, 2001).

Regarding the relationship between reflection and a portfolio, reflection in which learners can monitor their own progress and take responsibility for their learning to achieve their learning goals is one of the most essential components of a portfolio (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). Furthermore, portfolios offer learners opportunities to

make comparisons between their predetermined learning goals and their learning achievements. Hence, it can be concluded that portfolios help the participants to become autonomous learners because they are able to monitor and evaluate their learning process through reflection.

Self-assessment: The Most Challenging Skill

Self-assessment was the most challenging issue which the participants encountered. Self-assessment appears to be a controversial issue addressed not only in this study but also in other research projects. In general, self-assessment is regarded as reflection which monitors learners' learning progress and promotes learner motivation and confidence (Gardner, 2000), i.e., it refers to summative assessment which gives learners opportunities to understand what s/he has learned and how s/he has learned it at the end of a course (Mayer et al., 2008). Thus, self-assessment is a focal point in a range of studies concerning autonomous learning (e.g., Balçıkanlı, 2010; Gardner, 2000; Haseborg, 2012; Hobrom, 2004; Khodadady, 2012; Ying, 2002). For instance, one of the significant conclusions in Khodadady's (2012) study is that either learner autonomy or their writing ability improved by virtue of self-assessment.

In this study, on the other hand, self-assessment was conducted as a formative assessment, i.e., it refers to self-grading writing pieces using the writing assessment rubric during the course. In this respect, it was expected that the participants would realize their strengths as well as their weaknesses with respect to their writing ability and they would be able to determine how good their writing pieces were because self-assessment benefits learners in various ways, such as taking responsibility for their own learning, encouraging learners to do their best work, helping learners to set realistic goals on their achievements, helping learners to become lifetime learners. However,

some participants of this study admitted that they were unable to self-assess their writing pieces as well as the teacher because of a lack of confidence in their writing ability and unfamiliarity with self-grading their own writing pieces. It is because some English language learners, especially EFL learners, are not familiar with self-assessment (Gottlieb, 2006).

In line with this finding, the results which show that teacher assessment is preferred to self-assessment are found in some previous studies (e.g., Haseborg, 2012; Sakai, Takagi, & Chu, 2005; Yildirim, 2012). For example, learners themselves felt doubtful about their assessment ability when they were provided with an opportunity to self-assess their learning performance (e.g., Sakai, Takagi, & Chu, 2005; Yildirim, 2012). Instead of self-assessment, the students asked their teachers for in-class tests or quizzes in which the teacher would be responsible for grading and giving feedback (Haseborg, 2012).

In short, the participants revealed that they needed more time (more than one 15-week writing course) and the teacher's gradual guide to gain their confidence and willingness to conduct self-assessment independently. According to Gottlieb (2006), teachers should gradually introduce self-assessment at the beginning as a whole-group language experience, and individual learners then write reflection on their learning through interactive journals where teachers provide feedback before engaging in self-assessment independently.

Learning Content Based on Learners' Decisions

As presented in Chapter 2, learning content is related to social interaction, i.e., learners are supposed to have rights to make decisions about their learning content and make connections between the content of in-class learning and the world (society) as

researchers or teachers (Benson, 2001; Nunan,1997); thus, learning content is regarded as one of the three key aspects of learner autonomy. In another aspect, other researchers (e.g., Littlewood, 1997; Rivers & Golonka, 2009; Scharle & Szabó, 2000) focus more on decision-making ability regarding management and organization of learning than learning content, i.e., learning content is viewed as a minor factor in the definition of learner autonomy. Throughout the course, the participants had much more freedom to choose the learning materials appropriate for their writing than before. Indeed, they equipped themselves with the necessary information on how and what to search for. More importantly, according to several participants, looking for materials and choosing suitable ones to put in portfolios was identified as a vital task that helped to support their writing. In practice, the participants were able to find and choose materials from different sources like online and offline learning environments and/or human resources. This result was similar to that of some other studies (e.g., Duong & Seepho, 2014; Haseborg, 2012; Luke, 2006). It can be inferred from the results that the participants were willing to be responsible for what they learned if they were given enough freedom to make decisions on learning content. As revealed by the participants, freedom to make choice of learning materials offered them more motivation and eagerness to take responsibility for their own learning because learners themselves know what they want to learn (Nunan, 1996, 1997).

However, due to some unavoidable limitations (e.g., fixed school curriculum, time limit, limited learning sources), the participants in the current study were not really given the sufficient freedom to make decisions about their learning content, i.e., they had to strictly follow the content of the course book as scheduled. This limitation was probably a consequence of another limitation, namely, the time limit. They had to spend

considerable time covering the obligatory content rather than looking for other materials of their own choice. In fact, the time limit was one of the most common concerns revealed by the participants. Thus, searching for various other materials in this context was not really productive for the participants.

4.2.1.3 Similar Development Patterns in Learner Autonomy

By the end of the course, learner autonomy in terms of the three dimensions of *knowledge, awareness,* and *skills* improved after the 15-week writing course. Specifically, the autonomous learning tasks (e.g., setting learning goals, creating a study plan, selecting learning materials, self-assessing writing performance, and writing reflections) have similar development patterns (see Figures 4.1, 4.2, & 4.3). This means that the tasks which were rated lowest before the course (i.e., the participants' knowledge, awareness, or skills of tasks were perceived to be the worst) were still rated lowest after the course or vice versa. Apart from the highly rated tasks of 'setting learning goals' and 'writing reflections' which the participants felt they could do well, the tasks of 'creating a study plan', 'self-assessing writing performance', and 'choosing learning materials' need detailed discussion because the participants may have encountered difficulties while doing these tasks, which led to minor improvements.

As mentioned earlier, 'setting learning goals' and 'writing reflections' were the highest rated tasks both before and after the course. That is to say, the participants had good knowledge, great awareness, and mastery of the two tasks. Before the course, they had experienced or had some familiarity with these tasks. During the course, the participants set learning goals for each unit and reflected on their learning after each

unit in a writing log which was kept in a portfolio. It can be assumed that learners will be able to master these tasks if they carry them out regularly and deliberately.

With reference to *knowledge* of learner autonomy, the participants gained little knowledge of 'creating a study plan', self-assessing writing performance', or 'choosing learning materials' before the course ($\overline{X}$ = 1.89; $\overline{X}$ = 1.80; $\overline{X}$ = 1.74). After the course, however, the participants felt quite positive about their knowledge of 'creating a study plan' ($\overline{X}$ = 3.20), whereas they were not really confident about 'self-assessing writing performance' ($\overline{X}$ = 2.94) or 'choosing suitable learning materials' ($\overline{X}$ = 2.88). Some improvements may be due to the fact that the students learnt how to do these tasks in the pre-training. Nevertheless, the improvements were minor, especially for the task of learning to choose suitable materials. This can be explained by the fact that the teacher researcher just recommended some online and offline learning resources rather than guiding them on how to search for learning materials, while the participants were guided on how to create a study plan and to assess a piece of writing. Knowledge of learning is necessary for an autonomous learner because it helps to increase learners' willingness to be able to communicate and learn independently (Littlewood, 1997; Wenden, 1991). Thus, the knowledge of these tasks should be taken into more consideration so that it can be as equal as that of the higher rated tasks.

In respect of *skills* of learner autonomy, even though 'creating a study plan' and 'self-assessing writing performance' had the same rating (i.e., the lowest task) before the course ($\overline{X}$ = 1.83), they had different improvements after the course. In particular, 'creating a study plan' were well developed after the course ($\overline{X}$ = 3.31), whereas 'self-assessing writing performance' was still the lowest task ($\overline{X}$ = 3.00). Thus, the participants were less confident in conducting self-assessment than in creating a study plan.

Surprisingly, after the course, the participants believed that they were more competent in 'creating a study plan' ($\overline{X}$ = 3.31) than in 'choosing learning materials' ($\overline{X}$ = 3.20), although the participants reported that their skill of 'creating a study plan' ($\overline{X}$ = 1.83) was lower than that 'choosing learning materials' ($\overline{X}$ = 1.89) before the course. Furthermore, the participants were better able to create a study plan than to choose learning materials or to self-assess writing performance, although they took little serious notice of creating a study plan. This development can be attributed to the fact that the participants created study plans for each unit (i.e., they did this task at least four times during the course.). Hence, these tasks need to be implemented more frequently in order for the student to make more significant improvements.

In comparison with *knowledge* and *skills* of learner autonomy, the low rated tasks of *awareness* of learner autonomy were more equally developed after the course. Before the course, both 'creating a study plan' and 'choosing learning materials' were the lowest rated tasks the participants paid attention to ($\overline{X}$ = 1.83), and they still remained the lowest with a slight difference between them after the course ($\overline{X}$ = 3.11; $\overline{X}$ = 3.17). It is suggested that learners' awareness of these tasks should be raised through mentioning their benefits and importance to learner autonomy in the pre-training by the teacher and integrating awareness-raising strategies (e.g., small discussions and/or mini interviews) into the training process. This could help increase awareness of and attitudes toward autonomous learning which are an essential aspect of learner autonomy (Benson, 2001; Wenden, 1983, 1991).

To summarize, there was a considerable increase in the participants' autonomous learning after the 15-week writing course with the use of the PLAD model. Learner autonomy development, in particular, was discussed based on Benson's (2001)

definition of learner autonomy. The findings show the outstanding issues (e.g., writing reflections and awareness of learner autonomy) related to the control over cognitive processes, and the challenging issue (e.g., self-assessing writing performance) associated with the control over learning management, and a debatable issue, namely choosing learning materials which involves control over learning content. Thus, it can be concluded that portfolios help to develop learner autonomy because portfolios provide learners with opportunities to self-assess their writing drafts, compare achievements and their predetermined learning goals, and reflect on their learning process. From the limitations of the steps of self-assessing writing performance and choosing learning materials, however, it can be assumed that it is not easy to make learners entirely responsible when learner autonomy is promoted in EFL contexts because of the curricular design system and learners' limited ability (e.g., English proficiency and autonomous learning skills). Additionally, the similar development patterns of learner autonomy were discovered.

4.2.2 Writing Competence Development and Writing Strategies with the PLAD Model

In this section, the participants' writing performance and their employment of writing strategies are discussed to shed some light on their improvements in writing and also the writing strategies they used to produce an essay.

4.2.2.1 Considerable Improvements in Learners' Writing Performance

As far as writing performance is concerned, there was a significant difference between the mid-term scores and final scores. Specifically, the mid-term scores included nine bands (e.g., 4.0, 5.0, 5.5, 6.0, 6.5, 7.0, 7.5, 8.0, and 8.5), whilst the

final scores contained seven bands (e.g., 5.0, 6.0, 6.5, 7.0, 7.5, 8.0, and 9.0). It can be seen that better good scores and fewer fair and average scores were obtained by the participants in the final test than in the mid-term test. This means that the participants' writing competence clearly improved. This improvement may be due to the fact that they were able to identify their strengths and weaknesses and then found the strategies to improve their writing skill with regard to five aspects, namely content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics through the use of a portfolio. For example, some of the participants wanted to improve vocabulary because they had difficulty in expressing ideas in academic English academically; thus, their goal was to increase their lexical range by searching for materials to learn more academic vocabulary, synonyms, antonyms, collocations, idioms/phrases, etc. and putting them in their portfolios as artifacts. Additionally, the improvement may be a result of the fact that they compared their achievements with the predetermined learning goals and made suggestions on how to improve their weaknesses after each unit. In brief, the participants' writing competence improved in the writing class in which learner autonomy was predominantly promoted using a portfolio as a learning tool. Hence, it can be inferred that the improvement in the participants' writing performance is sustainable as the participants in this study were able to carry out the learning tasks on their own.

With regard to the relevant previous studies, it is interesting that two studies, of which the focus is quite similar to this study had two opposite results. On the one hand, Aliweh's (2011) study, aiming at investigating the effect of electronic portfolios on the enhancement of learners' writing competence and autonomy, demonstrated no significant effects on their writing competence and learner autonomy as a consequence

of cognitive styles, learning styles, instructional strategies, different teaching methodologies, lack of computer access, and lack of technology-based skills.

On the other hand, Khodadady's (2012) study, which was conducted with the purpose of exploring the effect of portfolio and self-assessment on writing tasks and self-regulation, showed positive results. In particular, the participants in the experimental group gained significantly higher scores involving writing and self-regulation than those in the control group after the course, although there was no significant difference in writing and self-regulation between the experimental group and the control group prior to the course, i.e., the participants in the experimental group must have improved due to the use of portfolios and self-assessment. Along the same lines as Khodadady's (2012) study, the current study shows improvements in writing with the use of portfolios. In fact, portfolios provide the participants with opportunities for the steps of review, reflection and revision of their writing drafts, which play important roles in the writing process. Therefore, it can be concluded from this study that the use of portfolios helped the participants to improve their writing competence.

4.2.2.2 Writing Strategies

Writing strategies include five aspects (e.g., content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics). The following is a detailed discussion on the writing strategies the participants used in their writing. The discussion is based on Oxford's (2011) strategic self-regulation model, which includes three dimensions: Cognitive, affective, and sociocultural-interactive.

Cognitive Strategies

Cognitive strategies help learners to construct, transform, and apply L2 knowledge (Oxford, 2011). Cognitive strategies, in this study, involved two issues:

Assuring coherence and cohesion in writing and translating ideas from L1 (Vietnamese) into L2 (English).

First, the participants placed an emphasis on the achieving coherence and cohesion in writing. Coherence and cohesion are often used together, but they have different characteristics. Coherence refers to the rhetorical aspects of discourse (i.e., organization of discourse), whereas cohesion refers to grammatical aspects of discourse (i.e., connection between sentences and paragraphs) (Hinkel, 2004). To increase coherence, the participants were willing to rearrange ideas or even change them to ensure a good organization of their material no matter how much time it might take them to do these things, which was a consequence of not making an outline before their writing. Apparently, there remained a conflict in terms of wasting time between making an outline in advance and editing an essay during the writing process. That is, it is assumed that they might spend much time making an outline before producing an essay. In practice, however, they revealed that they probably spent even more time on their essay writing if they had not previously written an outline. It can be inferred that a good outline may benefit the participants in saving time and producing a well-organized essay to increase coherence. In order to make a good outline, according to some scholars who have conducted studies on writing research (e.g., Hayes, 2006; Zemach & Stafford-Yilmaz, 2008), outlining should be created in the form of an ordered list of topics and sub-topics as it enables student writers to organize their thoughts, develop the organization of an essay, and provide a map of ideas.

Furthermore, with the aim to improve the cohesion of the writing, most of the participants tried to learn good English structures from reference materials and apply them in their writing aside from using transition markers, most notably conjunctions,

that create links within a sentence and between sentences (Mather, et al., 2009). This means that the participants are able to master this issue autonomously.

Second, the strategy of translating the ideas, which was obtained from the questionnaire, is viewed as a debatable strategy. On the one hand, the participants who supported this strategy justified collecting as many ideas as possible because that was their main purpose irrespective of the language they used. This finding was similar to those found in some previous studies (e.g., Alnufaie & Grenfell, 2012; Nguyen, 2009). On the other hand, other participants resisted this strategy arguing that as English majors, they should try to use English as much as possible. They suggested that EFL students should practice thinking and producing written work (e.g., a diary, a reflective journal, notes) in English. Similarly, Cohen (2011) recommends that a learner whose ultimate goal is to be fluent in L2 should be encouraged to think through L2 as much as possible during the language learning process as well as language use. It can be inferred that it is quite difficult for the participants to express their ideas in English without using translation, yet this matter can be improved through practice.

Affective Strategies

Affective strategies help learners to have positive attitudes and stay motivated (Oxford, 2011). In this study, avoiding making mistakes was commonly found in most writing strategies used by the participants. In other words, the participants were most likely to focus on accuracy while producing an essay. Noticeably, they spent most of the time learning vocabulary and grammar which were identified to be the most important aspects in essay writing by the participants.

As for strategies of vocabulary, in effect, they would prefer to use simple words instead of challenging ones in cases in which dictionaries or other materials were not

allowed to be used to ensure the accuracy of lexical use. In case of uncertainty about a new word, they were willing to change that word in order to avoid mistakes or misunderstandings. In practice, they frequently looked up new words in a dictionary to make sure that these words were used correctly. Additionally, they hardly ever used collocations, synonyms and/or antonyms, as well as idioms and/or phrases in their writing because of the fear of making mistakes. Surprisingly, idioms and/or phrases recognized as their weaknesses were deliberately learned and reported in the writing logs, yet these were never or almost never used in the participants' writing pieces due to their complexity. It can be inferred that they did not have sufficient confidence in their English proficiency. This finding is in line with one of the findings in Zhao's (2014) study in terms of preference for simple word use. It was concluded that Chinese EFL learners had a tendency to use simpler lexical cohesion than British learners as the consequence of their limited English proficiency.

Similar to the writing strategies of vocabulary, those of language use seemed to be accuracy-focused. As a matter of fact, they would like to make correct statements before producing another one, or they frequently checked their grammar by reading their writing while writing. They would also rather use simple structures than complex ones. It is likely that avoiding making mistakes helps participants to increase their confidence in writing an essay.

In respect of making mistakes, Pearson (2013) affirms that it is difficult to deal with fear the of making mistakes when learners have been harshly and unfairly criticized for a mistake without any way to defend themselves. Hence, it is recommended that learners should not pay much attention to mistakes while writing, especially in producing a first draft because they will have a chance to correct them in

the revision step (Pearson, 2013). As far as the relationship between learner anxiety over mistakes and their use of writing strategies is concerned, there is a negative correlation between them, i.e., the less anxious learners are, the more strategies they are able to employ (Stewart, Seifert, & Rolheiser, 2014). In another aspect, anxiety is seen as a symptom of just enough tension to get the job done (e.g., Ottens, 1991; Oxford, 2011). To sum up, "both too much and too little anxiety may hinder the process of successful second language learning" (Brown, 2000, p. 152).

In brief, the participants are able to develop vocabulary and grammar by themselves, yet fear of making mistakes probably hinders them from enriching their lexical and grammatical range.

Sociocultural-Interactive Strategies

Sociocultural-interactive strategies to cope with issues of communication, contexts, and culture in L2 learning (Oxford, 2011). For this study, sociocultural-interactive strategies are in relation to working with peers and/or the teacher. The participants discussed with peers and/or the teacher how to overcome knowledge gaps in expressing ideas and they assessed their peers' writing pieces to learn from each other. Evidently, working with others helps learners to work independently and to promote proactive learning (Macaro, 1997; Reid, 1993).

In summary, in view of what has been discussed so far, it can be concluded that the participants' writing competence improved at the end of the course. The discussion of writing strategies, moreover, demonstrates that the participants tended to use the strategies regarding indirectly expressing ideas from their mother tongue to English, increasing coherence and cohesion, minimizing mistakes, and working collaboratively.

4.2.3 Different Levels of Contribution of the PLAD Model Steps in Learner Autonomy Development

Based on the results reported above, it was discovered that the participants placed an emphasis on some particular steps of the PLAD model, whereas they overlooked some other steps in terms of frequency of implementation, i.e., they spent more time doing some steps than others. This unbalanced focus, thus, unintentionally caused different levels of contribution of these steps to learner autonomy development.

Setting Learning Goals

It is worth noting that the results of this study indicated a massive increase in setting learning goals which is considered one of the key components of autonomous learning (Rivers & Golonka, 2009). Also, the participants optimistically reported that they knew how to set learning goals and believed that it was a necessary task; hence, they felt positive about their skill of setting learning goals. These positive results derive from the fact that they could make decisions about what they would like to learn. Similar to this finding, Chau and Cheng (2010) discovered that learners could identify and modify learning goals appropriate for the tasks through the use of e-portfolios to foster learner autonomy.

Thanks to clearly-determined learning goals, more specifically, the participants in this study had an overall orientation to the course, which was followed by proper time management. As a result, all of them thought that this step was the most important step in developing learner autonomy. In Nunan's (1997) five-level categorization of implementation of autonomy (e.g., awareness, involvement, intervention, creation, and transcendence), creating learning goals is rated at the second highest level, i.e., if learners are able to create learning goals, they somehow obtain more opportunity to

become autonomous learners. Arising from the results presented by other scholars and the findings of this study, it can be inferred that setting learning goals is one of the key steps on the path to autonomous learning; thus, EFL learners should take this step into serious consideration if they wish to become autonomous learners.

Choosing Learning Materials

Choosing learning materials significantly contributed to learner autonomy development in this study. It was the freedom to make choice of materials used in their learning that gave the participants more motivation to take responsibility for their own learning because learners themselves know what they want to learn (Nunan, 1996, 1997). Similarly, some previous studies (e.g., Balçikanli, 2010; Haseborg, 2012; Yildirim, 2012) indicated that learners' attitudes toward autonomous learning will be positive if they have freedom to choose learning materials. It is recommended that this step should be promoted in an autonomous classroom.

Conducting Teacher Assessment

Teacher assessment is surprisingly perceived as a step that greatly contributed to learner autonomy development by the participants. They simply explained that they relied heavily on the teachers' feedback and evaluation on writing problems which they sometimes felt confused about. This seems to be contrary to the nature of autonomy advocated by scholars in this field (e.g., Benson, 2001; Little, 2001; Gardner, 2000; Rubin & Thompson, 1994; Sheerin, 1997) because it is believed that learner autonomy occurs when learners are independent from the teacher. Conversely, some researchers (e.g., Ganza, 2008; Little, 2004; Scharle & Szabó, 2000) emphasize the interrelation between learners and teachers in autonomous learning in which the learner's role is mainly concentrated, i.e., autonomous learners still need to work with the teacher, and

they may need the teacher's counseling in some cases. In short, the teacher's role is necessary in an autonomous classroom, yet it must be autonomy-based, i.e., the teacher can be a facilitator, a counselor, and a resource (e.g., Little, 2004; Voller, 1997). This means that this step should be flexibly used in an autonomous classroom.

Creating a Study Plan

The results obtained from the investigation into learner autonomy development regarding creating a study plan after the course were positive, so it was assumed to help learners to develop learner autonomy. In other words, the participants were ultimately competent enough to create a study plan despite the fact that they had almost never done this task before. In this regard, Wenden (1983, as cited in Benson, 2001) points out that planning learning content and learning methods is viewed as one of the three pillars of an autonomous learner's characteristics (e.g., knowing what language and language learning involves, planning the content and methods of learning, and self-evaluation of progress and the learning experience). It is apparent that creating a study plan also plays a fundamental role in autonomous learning, thus it should be taken into careful consideration in the autonomous learning process.

Writing Reflections

Writing reflections was one of the important tasks in promoting learner autonomy because it was the highest rated task of all after the course (see section 5.1.1). In other words, the participants were believed they were able to have control over their learning when they compared and contrasted their learning performance and the predetermined learning goals. Because of the significant influence of this step on learner autonomy, its forms (e.g., reflection journals, reflection statements, reflection essays, etc.) were used as tools to examine levels of autonomy that a learner achieved

in several studies (e.g., Chau & Cheng, 2010; Haseborg, 2012; Luke, 2006; Ying, 2002). According to Benson (2001), an autonomous learner is able to reflect on their learning at appropriate moments in the learning process. Obviously, writing reflections is a feasible task that should be promoted in an EFL writing course.

Conducting Peer Assessment

In this study, peer assessment was believed to partly contribute to learner autonomy development. Peer assessment is "an effective means for having English language learners practice academic language with each other" (Gottlieb, 2006, p. 145). Through peer assessment, furthermore, learners are provided with opportunities to share responsibility with each other and respect each other's language input because they are encouraged to work together rather than with the teacher. To sum up, peer assessment is believed to be a part of a sense of responsibility in learner independence (Hamp-Lyons & Condon, 2000; Macaro, 1997; Reid, 1993); therefore, this step should be focused on to help learners learn autonomously.

Conducting Self-assessment

Self-assessment serves as a testing tool for a self-monitoring process in which learners are capable of identifying their actual abilities and reflecting on their learning goals, strategies, and achievements (Gardner, 2000); therefore it is conducted as part of autonomous learning assessment. For this study, however, it was surprising that self-assessment was supposed to help the participants to learn autonomously even when they did not trust their own assessment skills. This can only be understood that learners may not be willing or confident to conduct self-assessment if they are not well-equipped with self-assessment skills (Gardner, 2000). Therefore, because of its importance to learner autonomy, knowledge of self-assessment (i.e., how to score a piece of writing)

should be introduced in detail to learners prior to a course, so that they are then competent to conduct self-assessment during the course.

To summarize, the participants generally had positive attitudes toward the PLAD model, although PLAD model steps, namely setting learning goals, choosing learning materials, conducting teacher assessment, creating a study plan, writing reflections, conducting peer assessment, and conducting self-assessment have different levels of contribution to the development of the autonomous learning process. Noticeably, assessment (e.g., teacher assessment, peer assessment, and self-assessment) was considered a debatable matter because the participants tended to underestimate the importance of self-assessment which was recognized as an assessment tool for autonomous learning, whereas they were in fact likely to be in favor of teacher assessment and peer assessment for developing autonomous learning.

4.2.4 Noteworthy Factors Influencing the Application of the PLAD Model in an EFL Writing Class

Given the qualitative analysis of factors influencing the participants' likes or dislikes of using a portfolio in a writing class to develop learner autonomy (see section 4.1.3.2), all the supportive factors and constraints were categorized into three major factors (e.g., personal factors, academic factors, and external factors) and discussed in both positive and negative aspects, as illustrated in Figure 4.2. Moreover, it is worth noting that there is an interrelated relationship among these factors, i.e., they have an influence on each other.
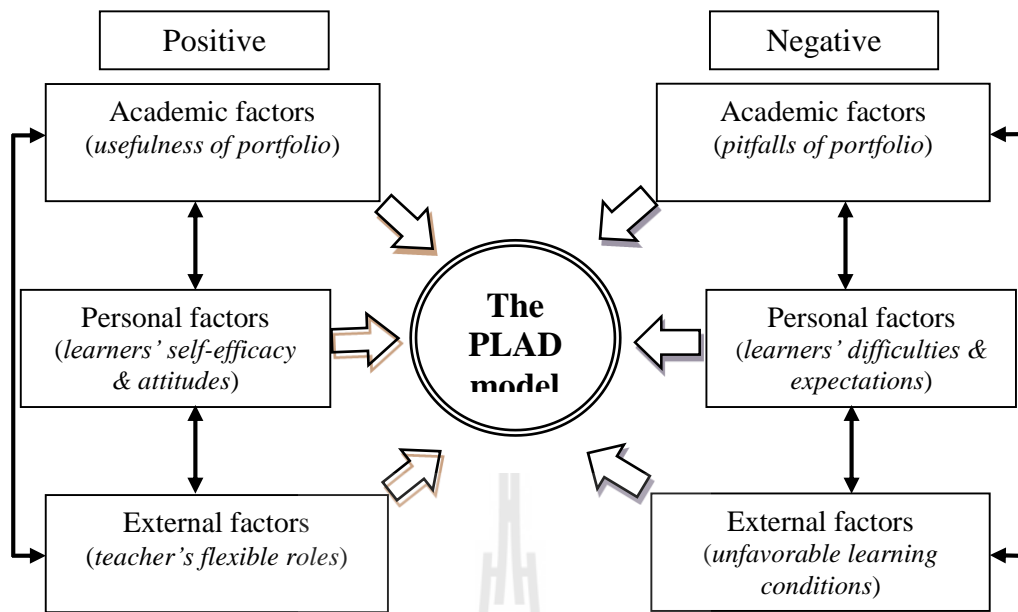
Figure 4.2. **Interrelated relationships among personal factors, academic factors,**

and external factors

4.2.4.1 Positive Factors

In this section, some issues regarding learners' self-efficacy and attitudes toward learner autonomy, usefulness of portfolio, and teacher's flexible roles are presented.

Learners' Self-efficacy and Attitudes toward Learner Autonomy

As shown by the results reported earlier, the vast majority of the participants recognized their autonomous learning improvement in terms of *knowledge*, *awareness*, and *skills*, of which *awareness* may be regarded as the leading dimension that more or less affected the other two dimensions. In other words, they felt positive about their current autonomous learning ability as a result of sufficient knowledge, great awareness, and good skills in carrying out their autonomous learning tasks. It has been explained that one of the important reasons for this positive result was the freedom of choosing tasks and materials and expressing their ideas in class without any

psychological barriers. This finding of positive attitudes toward learner autonomy is also found in some studies of this field (e.g., Balçikanli, 2010; Haseborg, 2012; Iimuro & Berger, 2010). For example, it was concluded that the opportunity to make a choice of learning content really helped the participants to increase their learning motivation which results in positive attitudes. This means that learning attitudes are one of the most important aspects that need to be taken into consideration for developing learner autonomy. Moreover, as Wenden (1991) describes, an autonomous learner needs to possess learning strategies, knowledge of learning, and positive learning attitudes so that he/she is able to learn independently of the teacher. It can be further implied that the participants gradually become autonomous learners throughout the writing course with the application of the PLAD model because of their developed efficacy in autonomous learning tasks and their positive attitudes toward learner autonomy.

Usefulness of Portfolio

One of the most noticeable issues in this study was the employment of a portfolio as a learning tool. Prior to the discussion on this issue, it is essential to present the learning method employed in the previous writing courses to throw light on how the participants had learned in the writing courses and how different the previous and the current learning methods are. According to their reports in the questionnaire, they had previously played a role as passive followers who had been simply listened to the teacher and then undertake tasks with the instructions of the teacher, and their personal ideas had tended to be discouraged. In contrast, the teacher had been considered the leader who had been in charge of almost all tasks like provision of knowledge, assessment, checking homework, etc. Furthermore, their focus was on the product (grades) not the process (ways to gain knowledge). In general, the teacher-directed

learning method has been commonly used in Vietnam as a traditional learning method in which the teacher's role is given great emphasis (e.g., Dang, 2012; Nguyen, 2009; Tran, 2013; Trinh, 2005). Not only has this situation occurred in the Vietnamese EFL context, but it has also been quite common in other EFL contexts like China, Egypt, Macedonia, Japan, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey (e.g., Aliweh, 2011; Balçikanli, 2010; Chu, 2004; Duong & Seepho, 2014; Mineishi, 2010; Sanprasert, 2010; Xhaferi & Xhaferi, 2011). As a result, the participants probably got used to the traditional learning method, so it could be a challenging task to introduce a new learning method to them.

A portfolio was recognized as a useful learning tool that the participants experienced in this study. According to Paulson, et al. (1991), a portfolio is a collection of work that a learner deliberately creates to show their achievements or progress in a particular area. Hence, it brings learners benefits like reflection on and self-awareness of their learning, development of self-management ability, development of self-assessment and decision-making abilities, recognition of written language acquisition development, and development of revision ability through delayed evaluation (Weigle, 2002). For this study, three clearly-determined benefits of a portfolio included the ability to self-manage their learning through identification of learning goals, creation of a study plan with specific strategies, choice of reference materials, reflection on learning, the ability to self-assess and make decisions about what they should put in a portfolio, and the ability to show improvements in their writing competence through a series of the drafts from first to last. Some studies (e.g., Büyükdumana & Şirina, 2010; Chau & Cheng, 2010; Xhaferi & Xhaferi, 2011) also demonstrate the positive impacts of a portfolio on the development of learner autonomy and language learning

performance. This can be interpreted that the participants were able to use a portfolio in a proper way to develop learner autonomy and writing competence.

Teacher's Flexible Roles

As presented in section 2.1.2, a teacher should work with learners in the autonomous learning process (e.g., Ganza, 2008; Scharle & Szabó, 2000). This should not mean that the teacher plays a leading role in an autonomous language classroom. The teacher should be a facilitator who helps learners to plan and carry out learning tasks, a counselor who gives advice when learners need help, and a resource manager who provides learners with information to solve problems (e.g., Little, 2004; Longworth, 2003; Voller, 1997). In this study, it was expected that the teacher should take a role as a facilitator, a mentor, and a resource to help to promote learner autonomy with enthusiasm, friendliness, and a sense of humor, which would create a pressure-free learning atmosphere in which there was a good interaction between the teacher and learners. A good relationship between EFL teachers and learners that helps develop learner autonomy is also found in a few other studies (e.g., Chan, 2000; Iimuro & Berger, 2010). To sum up, it is vital for teachers to help learners to know how to become autonomous learners as, according to Mayer et al. (2008), learners do not become effective autonomous learners all by themselves.

4.2.4.2 Negative Factors

This section discusses learners' difficulties and expectations of developing learner autonomy, pitfalls of portfolio, and unfavorable learning conditions.

Learners' Difficulties and Expectations of Developing Learner Autonomy

Contrary to the positive result obtained from the majority of participants involving the development of self-efficacy and awareness of learner autonomy with the

use of a portfolio in a writing course, a very small number of the participants admitted that they did not really pay much attention to the creation of a study plan, the choice of learning materials, and self-assessment of writing performance due to a lack of confidence in their writing ability (i.e., they heavily relied on teacher assessment), laziness, shortage of time, an inability to complete time-consuming tasks, and the inflexibility of a fixed schedule (i.e., a writing log). The participants expected that the teacher should be the person to take the responsibility for assessment. In other words, they were reluctant to become autonomous learners because of some the above-mentioned difficulties. Furthermore, they clearly lacked in dealing with the new learning approach. Similarly, the student participants in some studies (e.g., Duong & Seepho, 2014; Gardner, 2007; Haseborg, 2012; Sakai, Takagi, & Chu, 2005; Xhaferi & Xhaferi, 2011; Yıldırım, 2012) were dependent on the teachers' evaluation and direction because they believed that teachers had more knowledge and experience of assessment than students. Therefore, teachers should provide adequate feedback on learners' homework or assignments not only to increase their confidence in autonomous learning, but also to develop a reflective aspect of autonomous learning (Mayer et al., 2008).

Pitfalls of Portfolio

A small number of the participants who did not support the use of a portfolio in the writing course felt doubtful about the usefulness of a portfolio because of its pitfalls. Their first concern was that it was a waste of time. It was reported that they spent much time on the preparation of documents (e.g., writing logs, drafts, artifacts, and other reference materials) for a portfolio and implementation of the predetermined study plan. The first concern, to some extent, led to the second concern, which was cheating on

documents and the implementation of tasks. Particularly, few of them did not have enough time to prepare documents for a portfolio, so they just tried to fill the portfolio with any documents and artifacts, i.e., they did not follow the study plan created and stored in the portfolio. These participants tended to be reactive learners who did not take control over their learning with the use of a portfolio. In this sense, Littlewood (1999) affirms that Asian learners possess reactive autonomy in which learners organize learning resources autonomously to achieve the goals, but they cannot take responsibility for their own learning, such as setting their goals, selecting what to learn, and reflecting on what s/he has acquired, like those who have a proactive autonomy. This finding is somehow similar to that of Aliweh's (2011) study, which shows no significant effects of e-portfolios on learners' writing competence or on learner autonomy because of the traditional learning methods which are teacher-dominated, textbook-centered, and exam-driven. This result, however, is contrary to the common belief that autonomous learners need to take responsibility for their own learning (e.g., Benson, 2001; Macaro, 1997; Nunan, 1997; Scharle & Szabó, 2000). In short, to become an autonomous language learner, an EFL learner needs to be aware of the importance of autonomous learning.

Unfavorable Learning Conditions

Another factor assumed to influence the failure of developing learner autonomy in this study was unfavorable learning conditions. This includes inconvenient facilities (e.g., no Internet access in class and uncomfortable classrooms) and insufficient learning resources (e.g., limited reference books, lack of a self-access center, and strict regulations in respect of checking out books) was seen as one of the constraints that contributed to the failure of participants being able to learn autonomously. In this

regard, Leithwood (2006) asserts, "poor working conditions will likely depress initially high levels of both ability and motivation" (p. 6). Hence, it is believed that the students' learning motivation was affected by such unfavorable conditions. From this, we may deduce that the participants' readiness for autonomous learning would have increased if learning conditions had been improved.

4.2.4.3 Interrelated Relationships among Personal Factors, Academic Factors, and External Factors

As presented earlier, personal factors, academic factors, and external factors are positively correlated with one another (see Figure 4.2). This means that if personal factors are positively changed, academic factors and/or external factors are also positively changed or vice versa. Particularly, learners' performance and attitudes towards learner autonomy, the use of portfolios, the teacher's guidance and help, and the learning environment all have an influence on each other.

Concerning the relationship between personal factors (e.g., learning attitudes) and academic factors (e.g., the use of a portfolio), several scholars (e.g., Murphy & Camp, 1996; O'Malley & Pierce, 1996; Weigle, 2002) point out that a portfolio can enable learners to promote a sense of ownership, which increases learner motivation in learning. If learners do not carry out the portfolio tasks (e.g., collection, reflection and self-assessment, selection, etc.) seriously, however, the quality of a portfolio is not ensured (Hamp-Lyons & Condon, 2000).

According to several researchers (Ganza, 2008; Little, 2004; Longworth, 2003; Mayer et al., 2008; Voller, 1997), the relationship between personal factors (e.g., learners' performance) and external factors (e.g., teacher's roles and unfavorable learning conditions) in an autonomous classroom is interrelated. Evidently,

learners' autonomous learning process causes low efficiency without a teacher's counseling and guidance, whereas the teacher's roles are shaped by the learners' performance (e.g., learners' efficacy and attitudes toward autonomous learning) (Ganza, 2008). Additionally, learners' autonomous learning performance is partly affected by learning conditions (Leithwood, 2006).

Similarly, there is an interactive relationship between academic factors (e.g., portfolios) and external factors (e.g., teacher's roles). In order to help learners to create a good portfolio, a teacher needs to act as a guide as well as a feedback provider who gives constructive and specific feedback on the strengths and weaknesses based on the assessment of the learners' work in portfolios. Obviously, the employment of a portfolio in a writing course to develop learner autonomy may change the teacher's roles (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996).

Briefly, the positive factors (e.g., the usefulness of portfolio, learners' self-efficacy and attitudes toward learner autonomy, and teacher's flexible roles) and the negative factors (e.g., pitfalls of portfolio, learners' difficulties and expectations of developing learner autonomy, and unfavorable learning conditions) were discussed above with the aim to elucidate the reasons underlying their support for or resistance to developing learner autonomy using a portfolio as a learning and assessment tool in an EFL writing class. Furthermore, the interrelated relationships among these factors were addressed.

4.3 Summary

This chapter provided the analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaire, semi-structured interview, tests, and portfolios and the discussions of the findings based on the research questions. The data analysis was followed by discussions on three major issues: (1) learner autonomy development in terms of *knowledge*, *awareness*, and *skills*, (2) the participants' improvements in writing competence and the most preferred writing strategies relating to cognitive, affective, and sociocultural-interactive factors, and (3) their positive attitudes toward the use of the PLAD model in the EFL writing course and factors (e.g., academic, personal, and external factors) influencing their support for or resistance to promoting learner autonomy through the use of the PLAD model. The next chapter will present the portfolio-based learner autonomy development (PLAD) model.
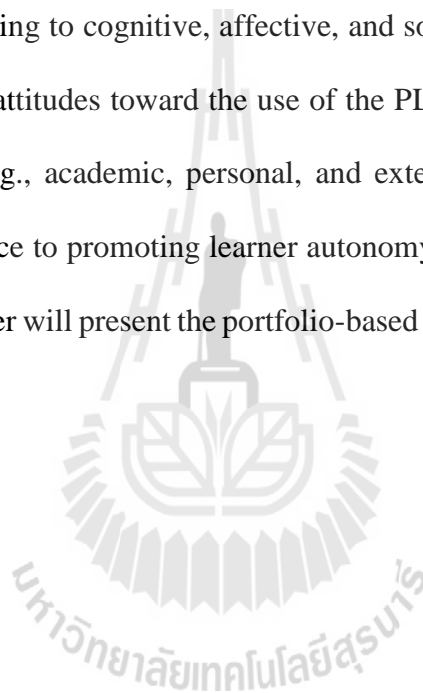
CHAPTER 5

THE PORTFOLIO-BASED LEARNER AUTONOMY

DEVELOPMENT (PLAD) MODEL

The aim of this chapter is to present the results of the portfolio-based learner autonomy development (PLAD) model. It starts with an introduction to the PLAD model. The introduction is followed by the presentation of revision of the PLAD model after the experiment and components of the PLAD model which is described in twelve logical steps: (1) pre-training, (2) portfolio tasks, (3) input, (4) setting goals, (5) creating a study plan, (6) selecting resources, (7) employing writing process, (8) self-assessing writing performance, (9) self-monitoring learning process, (10) external feedback from peers and the teacher, (11) output, and (12) summative evaluation. Then some lessons learned during the application of the PLAD model are addressed. The chapter ends with the strengths and weaknesses of the PLAD model.

5.1 Introduction

The PLAD model has been developed based on Lam's (2013) conceptual model of self-regulated learning in a context of portfolio assessment, Huitt's (2003) model of teaching/learning process, and instructional design (ISD) models, namely the ADDIE model, the Dick and Carey systems approach model, and the ASSURE Model. This model, thus, serves as a guideline for developing learner autonomy using a portfolio in an EFL writing course. Details of the PLAD model are described in the following sections.

5.2 The PLAD Model

This section addresses revision of the PLAD model after the experiment and components of the PLAD model.

5.2.1 Revision of the PLAD Model after the Experiment

Based upon the findings of the study, it is concluded that the proposed PLAD model is effective for use in an EFL writing course. In other words, the steps of the proposed PLAD model are workable. Hence, almost all the steps of the proposed model (see Figure 3.3) are kept for the complete PLAD model (see Figure 5.1) except for the step of *delayed evaluation and formative feedback.* The reason for this is that this step can be included in *self-monitoring learning process* in which EFL learners review their written work and portfolio tasks when they choose documents for their portfolios and reflect on their learning.

In addition, one of the most important steps that contributes to the effectiveness of the PLAD model is *pre-training* which was not included in the proposed PLAD model. This means that some issues (e.g., identifying learning styles, the concept of learner autonomy, creating a study plan, employing writing process and strategies, using scoring schemes, and developing a portfolio) should be introduced and used as a guide for learners before the portfolio-based writing course so that learners can acquire the necessary knowledge and confidence to deal with autonomous learning tasks during the course. According to Littlewood (1997), an EFL teacher should help learners to develop confidence, motivation, knowledge, and skills in order to become independent communicators, independent learners, and independent individuals.

In short, the complete PLAD model includes twelve logical steps, namely *pre-training, portfolio tasks, input, setting goals, creating a study plan, selecting resources,*

employing writing process, self-assessing writing performance, self-monitoring learning process, external feedback from peers and the teacher, output, and *summative evaluation.*

5.2.2 Components of the PLAD Model

The PLAD model is composed of three major stages: (1) input, (2) process, and (3) output. In the first stage, learners are prepared for autonomous learning with cognitive and affective factors through an introduction of some issues relating to learner autonomy, writing skills, and a portfolio. In the second stage, autonomous learning tasks are carried out by the learners. In the last stage, learners show their learning achievements in terms of their autonomous learning skills, writing skills, and portfolio skills. Additionally, summative evaluation conducted by the teacher is included in this stage with the aim to complete all the necessary learning activities before starting a new learning cycle.
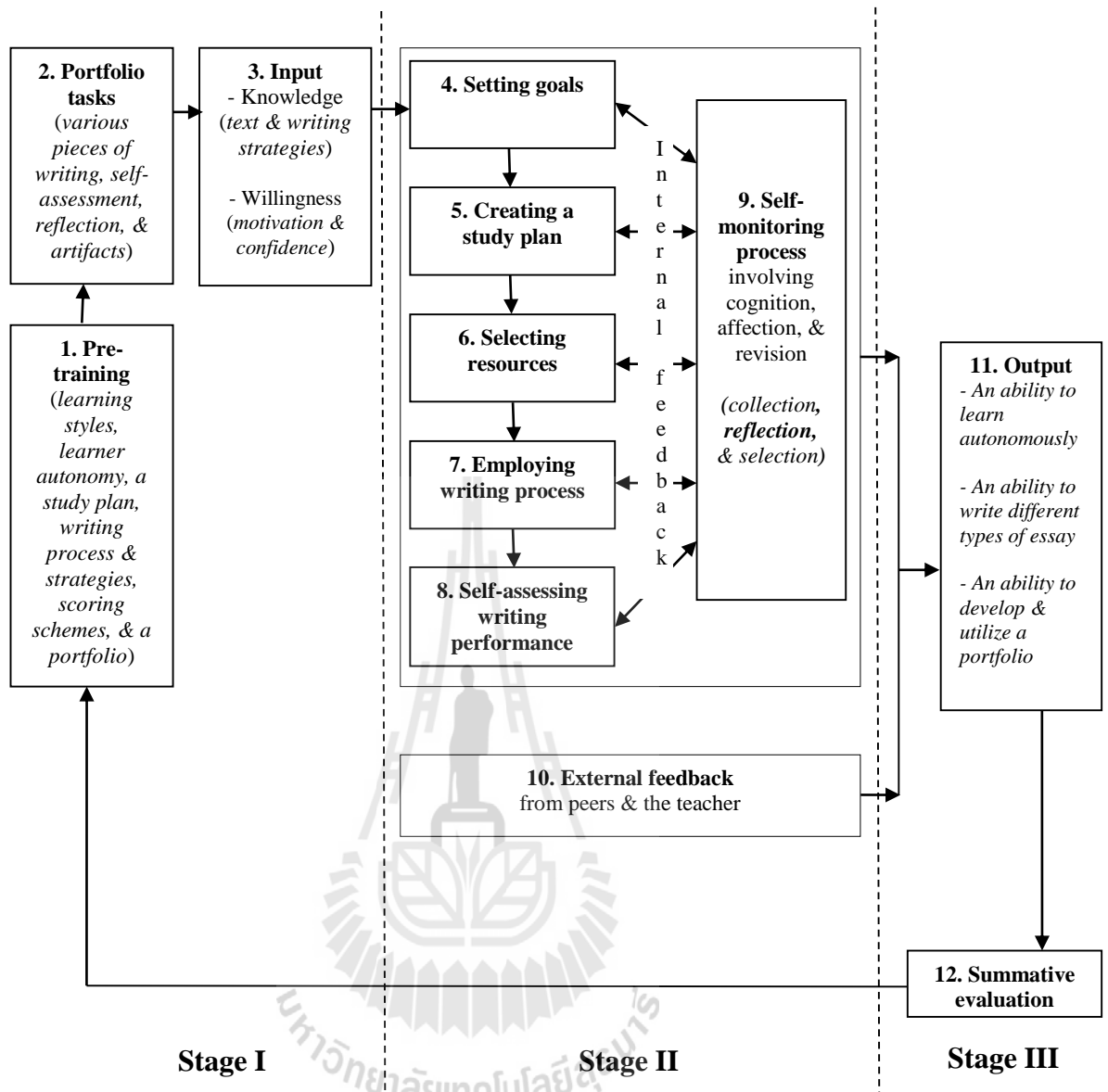
Figure 5.1. The portfolio-based learner autonomy development (PLAD) model in an EFL writing course

As shown in Figure 5.1, the PLAD model consists of twelve steps. With the aim to facilitate the application of the PLAD model in an EFL writing course, there should be clear instructions for the PLAD model with the focus on roles of an EFL teacher and learners.

Stage I: Input

Step 1: Pre-training

Learners are introduced to the theoretical background of learning styles, the concept of learner autonomy, creating a study plan, employing writing process and writing strategies, self-assessing and scoring writing pieces, and developing a portfolio (see section 3.6.1). They then practice these tasks with a teacher who serves as a guide.

Step 2: Portfolio tasks

This step helps learners to notice what tasks they should carry out for their portfolio. Portfolio tasks include various pieces of writing, self-assessment, reflection, and artifacts associated with various writing topics. A teacher needs to emphasize the importance of self-assessment and reflection and guide learners how to choose and arrange their writing pieces and relevant artifacts in a portfolio to make sure that these tasks do not confuse them.

Step 3: Input

Learners need to be prepared for autonomous learning with cognitive factors (e.g., knowledge of texts and writing strategies) and affective factors (e.g., motivation and confidence) in order for them to be able to do the tasks by themselves. Knowledge of a text is related to text structure in terms of field, mode, and tenor as perceived by learners, and learners' in-class presentations should be concerned with rhetorical focus and language focus for each type of essays to help them to review their knowledge. In opinion essays, for example, one group presented rhetorical focus (e.g., organization of opinions, facts and opinions, and counter-argument and refutation) and another group presented language focus (e.g., expressions of quantity in opinion essays and the use of connectors to show support or opposition). Knowledge of writing strategies is

introduced by a teacher in the pre-training. In addition to knowledge, the willingness of the learners needs to be included in this step because Littlewood (1997) states that learners need to possess ability (e.g., knowledge and skills) and willingness (e.g., motivation and confidence) if they want to be autonomous learners.

Stage II: Process

Step 4: Setting goals

Goal setting is considered an important part in most educational contexts as it yields "a rationale for selecting and integrating pedagogical tasks, as well as providing a point of reference for the decision-making process" (Nunan & Lamb, 1996, p. 27). Thus, learners are encouraged to set their own long-term and short-term goals to direct their learning process and inputs (e.g., knowledge of texts and writing strategies and willingness to do portfolio tasks).

Step 5: Creating a study plan

In this step, learners create a study plan based on the sample one (see Appendix D). During the creation of a study plan, the teacher can be a facilitator and/or a resource person who helps learners to deal with their problems. After completing the study plan, learners will put it in their portfolios for future reference.

Step 6: Selecting resources

Regarding the question "what is a resource?", Nunan and Lamb (1996) indicate that a resource can be anything existing in the classroom, including not only technical hardware and software, e.g., books, tapes, and videos, but also human resources that exist, such as the teacher and the learners. Accordingly, the teacher plays a role as a resource who gives learners information when needed, whilst learners can learn from the teacher and/or peers by sharing types of resources, strengths and weaknesses of resources, and ways to search for and choose appropriate resources.

Step 7: Employing writing process

Regarding a teacher's and learners' roles in the writing process step, learners play several roles, such as writers, editors, feedback givers, or even readers, whereas a teacher is a facilitator and/or a counselor, i.e., if learners find the task too challenging, they will ask a teacher for help.

Step 8: Self-assessing writing performance

After producing an essay, learners self-assess their writing with the use of the self-assessment checklist (see Appendix K) and writing assessment rubric (see Table 2.3). In particular, learners first edit an essay based on the self-assessment checklist. Then they grade it using the writing assessment rubric. Finally, they give themselves a grade for their work and make some remarks in the self-assessment checklist. While learners are doing these tasks, a teacher goes round the class, observes the learners' self-assessment process and also advises them about the time they have for their self-assessment.

Step 9: Self-monitoring learning process

This step involves cognition, affection, and revision. Writing reflections, which is an aspect of cognition, is seen as a key task in this step because it serves as a link among the portfolios, learner autonomy, and writing competence in this study. Through reflection, learners may have opportunities to review their portfolio tasks before the portfolio assessment, self-assess their writing performance, and compare their learning achievements and predetermined learning goals. There are two types of reflections: A writing log and reflection on their likes and dislikes of the course. In the writing log, in particular, learners assess how good their writing performance is and give recommendations for later study plans by simply answering the proposed questions, whereas reflection on the likes and dislikes of the course lead to comments on the strong and weak points of the course.

Step 10: External feedback from peers/teacher

During peer assessment, learners provide feedback on their peers' written work based on their use of the peer assessment checklist (see Appendix L) and the writing assessment rubric (see Table 2.3), while a teacher plays a role as a coordinator who collects learners' writing pieces and distributes them to their peers and a counselor who gives advice to learners when necessary.

Stage III: Output

Step 11: Output

After each learning cycle, it is expected that learners will be able to take control of their learning, to write an essay using different types of essay, and to use a portfolio as a learning tool in a writing course.

Step 12: Summative evaluation

The teacher is in charge of summative evaluation, which appears to be irrelevant to an autonomous classroom. It is, however, necessary to be included in the PLAD model as the teacher's evaluation of one learning cycle (one unit) helps learners to increase their confidence in autonomous learning. After the summative evaluation, a new learning cycle starts again.

All in all, learners need to implement most of the PLAD model steps in relation to learner autonomy development except for *pre-training*, whereas a teacher predominantly gets involved in the three steps consisting of *pre-training, portfolio tasks,* and *summative evaluation* to help EFL learners with the preparation and wrap-up stages. To illustrate the implementation of the PLAD model in a real writing class, examples of a portfolio-based learner autonomy development lesson are presented in Appendix O.

5.3 Lessons Learned

As presented earlier, the PLAD model had twelve steps which were carried out systematically (e.g., *pre-training, portfolio tasks, input, setting goals, creating a study plan, selecting resources, employing writing process, self-assessing writing performance, self-monitoring learning process, external feedback from peers and the teacher, output,* and *summative evaluation*). This section presents a number of noticeable lessons which were learned during the application of the PLAD model and some recommendations for improvement.

First of all, *pre-training* was one of the most important steps of the PLAD model, yet it was not easy to introduce the concept of learner autonomy and tasks to the participants because of their existing learning attitudes. The participants were familiar with the teacher-directed teaching method which was generally believed to be the best way to obtain knowledge. In addition, they seemed to be doubtful about the benefits of learner autonomy, portfolios, and autonomous learning tasks used in the writing course because they had not experienced them before.

Hence, an EFL teacher should prepare the training materials carefully to help learners to get sufficient knowledge of learner autonomy and the tasks they are going to do during the course. This helps the learners to increase their confidence and motivation. Regarding the concept of learner autonomy, the teacher should provide learners with videos of an autonomous classroom and a traditional classroom. This should be followed by discussions among the learners regarding the advantages and disadvantages of the two classrooms. It is hoped that the learners will be able to recognize the benefits of learner autonomy. Furthermore, in order to ensure that the learners are competent to do these

tasks, practice should be followed by an explanation of the theoretical background. The recommended time for pre-training is at least six hours.

Secondly, *setting goals* significantly contributed to the success of learner autonomy in this study. Thus, this step should be carefully carried out before learners do other autonomous learning tasks. First, the learners should identify their learning needs as well as the strengths and weaknesses of their writing skills. Then they should set their learning goals to improve their weak points and reinforce their strong points. The learners may not know how to set learning goals at first; therefore, the teacher should guide them on how to analyze their learning styles, identify their strengths and weaknesses and finally set their short-term and long-term learning goals in their study plan.

Thirdly, the result indicates that the participants were capable of *creating a study plan*, although they encountered some difficulties in doing this at first. In order for learners to be capable of doing this task, the benefits of creating a study plan in an autonomous language classroom should be pointed out in the pre-training by the teacher. When the learners start doing this task, it would be preferable to provide learners with a sample study plan as an example.

Fourthly, one of the important lessons learned from this study is in relation to s*electing resources*. In particular, the participants did not have enough time to look for and make use of supplementary learning materials because of the fixed school curriculum and limited learning sources in this context.

In order to deal with time constraints, learners should actively look for learning materials that they are interested in and then consult the teacher if they are not sure about them or, if possible, try to find answers to the problems by themselves. For example, one of the learners wants to enrich her vocabulary. She first tries to learn new

words from the paper-based reading texts in the textbook and the academic vocabulary for IELTS at home. She also looks for some authentic materials (e.g., movies, TV shows, and documentaries) and consults the teacher in class.

To help learners to enrich their learning sources, furthermore, the teacher should recommend some useful sources, such as online learning environments (e.g., Facebook, YouTube, Google, VOA, CNN, online newspapers/magazines), offline learning environments (e.g., library, newspapers, reference books, CDs), and/or human resources (e.g., seniors, friends, teachers).

Fifthly, the most challenging task that the participants encountered during the course was *self-assessing writing performance*. One of the main reasons for this was lack of confidence in self-assessment.

To facilitate this task, there should be a self-assessment checklist and a writing assessment rubric. These forms should be introduced and explained in detail to learners in the pre-training and then they should be reminded about them during the course. Learners should spend more time conducting self-assessment, i.e., they should do this both inside and outside the class. In addition, the learners may have a discussion with their teacher about which writing drafts to choose for their portfolios. If necessary, the teacher should give learners suitable advice to help them to solve their problems. It can be assumed that the teacher's help or guidance will, to some extent, increase learners' confidence in their self-assessment.

Contrary to *self-assessing writing performance,* moreover, *self-monitoring learning process* was one of the most developed skills in this study. Most of the participants wrote their reflections and made their recommendations for improvement carefully. They may have learned many useful things from writing reflections.

However, some of the participants just reflected on their learning achievements with little serious attention, using only such comments as "done," "good," and "try more".

To help learners to be able to develop a portfolio in general and write reflections in particular, a teacher should introduce a portfolio assessment checklist with evaluation criteria (see Appendix M) in the pre-training so that the learners can learn how to assess both their own portfolio and their peers' portfolio. Then the teacher randomly chooses some of the learners' writing logs for assessment after each unit. After the assessment, the teacher should point out both the good and weak points found in the writing logs from which learners will be able to improve their work in the future.

Next, the finding demonstrates that *external feedback from peers/teacher* partly contributed to the development of learner autonomy, yet at the same time some of the participants appeared not to trust their peers' assessment of their writing. In fact, they believed that teacher assessment was more reliable than peer assessment because the teacher was assumed to have good knowledge and experience. Therefore, they felt confident when they received feedback on their writing and were given marks for their work from the teacher.

To increase learners' confidence in peer assessment, it is recommended that a class should be divided into smaller groups of three or four students. It will be better if strong and weak learners are mixed together in one group so that they can learn from each other. Each group will randomly get three or four writing pieces from other groups and assess them one by one. With regard to a teacher's role, instead of grading every single piece of writing, the teacher can help to give comments on confusing issues which arise when the learners are working in groups. The teacher may also note down

common mistakes which are found during peer assessment time and explain them to learners in class afterwards if necessary.

Finally, to conduct *summative evaluation* effectively, the teacher should randomly choose some portfolios for assessment after each unit (four times per course) before collecting all portfolios for assessment at the end of the course. This helps the teacher to evaluate each learner's learning process, and some adjustments to the portfolios may be made. It is also recommended that a mini-interview should be conducted after the teacher assesses the learners' portfolios in each unit. This probably takes time, yet it will enable the teacher to get a better understanding of the problems which the learners are encountering, and the teacher may then be able to give advice to solve the problems.

5.4 Strengths and Weaknesses of the PLAD Model

The PLAD model should be taken into consideration in teaching practices or research because of its benefits as follows.

Firstly, the PLAD model is evidently effective. The PLAD model first helps to develop learner autonomy in terms of *knowledge, awareness,* and *skills*. It helps to raise learners' awareness of autonomous learning in this context, in which the learners' responsibility for their own learning has been underestimated because it provides the learners with freedom and rights to make decisions relating to their learning. Then the PLAD model enables the learners to gradually master autonomous learning skills, such as setting learning goals, creating a study plan, choosing learning materials, self-assessing writing performance, and writing reflections. Not only does the PLAD model help to promote learner autonomy, but it also helps to improve the learners' writing competence.

Based on the effectiveness of the PLAD model, it is hoped that the learners will apply autonomous learning skills in their later courses to take control of their own learning. As a result, they will gradually become autonomous learners who "go beyond the classroom and make links between the content of classroom learning and the world" (Nunan, 1997, p. 195).

Secondly, the PLAD model is systematic. The complete PLAD model consists of twelve steps. Apart from steps related to writing teaching/ learning process (e.g., portfolio tasks, input, employing a writing process, output, external feedback, and summative evaluation), it includes autonomy-related steps (e.g., pre-training, setting goals, creating a study plan, selecting resources, self-assessing writing performance, and self-monitoring the learning process). Each step has its own role in introducing learner autonomy to learners and gradually getting them involved in developing autonomous learning skills, yet there is a relationship between the steps of the PLAD model because the steps support each other.

Thirdly, the PLAD model is highly applicable. It contains specific steps each of which provides important skills in general. Details of each step which describe the teacher's and learners' roles can be regarded as sub-steps that help learners to master the skills. Therefore, it is easy for EFL teachers to apply the PLAD model in their writing classes. In other words, the PLAD model is teacher-friendly because it consists of easy-to-follow steps which will help the implementation of the model in a real writing class.

Finally, the PLAD model is flexible. It can be applied for macro skills, such as speaking, listening, reading and writing, if some steps of the model are modified or adjusted to meet the requirements and aims of a particular course. In an EFL reading

course, for example, the steps of 'employing a writing process' and 'self-assessing writing performance' should be modified while the other steps are basically similar to those for the writing course. More specifically, the step of 'employing a writing process' may be changed into 'employing reading strategies' including: (1) pre-reading learning strategies focusing on building background understanding of a reading, namely, listing everything about a general topic and predicting which items in the list they might find in the reading, (2) cooperative-reading learning strategies involving working in pairs or groups to achieve goals that are set by the learners themselves, and (3) post-reading learning strategies concerning collaborative learning in which EFL learners select a word or a term in the reading text they wish to learn, and then work with partners to find out more about that word or term (e.g., where they can find it, what they think it means in the context, and why they think it is necessary to learn it); the step of 'self-assessing writing performance' can be changed into 'self-assessing reading performance' in which the EFL learners self-assess their reading performance based on the reading assessment rubric.

In spite of its benefits, the PLAD model contains some weaknesses. First, even though the PLAD model is effective, it is not simple for either EFL teachers who have never implemented autonomous learning tasks (e.g., goal setting, creation of a study plan, selection of learning materials, self-assessment, and reflection) in their classes or EFL learners who have not known about learner autonomy previously to apply the PLAD model in an EFL writing course without training. In other words, it is essential to train EFL learners and teachers so that they are able to obtain the necessary knowledge, skills, and willingness to implement the PLAD model in a writing course effectively. Specifically, EFL teachers need to be trained to use the PLAD model in a

writing course. This means that the steps of the model and pre-training issues (e.g., learning needs and styles, the concept of learner autonomy, creation of a study plan, the writing process and strategies, scoring schemes, and portfolio development) need to be described in detail because EFL teachers ought to introduce these pre-training issues to their learners before the course starts. Hence, EFL teachers need to master the PLAD model steps and the pre-training issues. In addition, EFL learners need to be trained prior to the writing course if the concept of learner autonomy and tasks in relation to learner autonomy are new to them.

Second, the PLAD model requires rigorous implementation from both EFL teachers and learners. Both of them need to carry out every step of the PLAD model carefully because it is a process-based model in which the steps have their own roles and support each other. Hence, they should not skip any of the steps or implement the steps without giving them careful attention. Otherwise, the PLAD model will not be able to work well.

5.5 Summary

This chapter has provided the introduction to the portfolio-based learner autonomy development (PLAD) model. Then the comparison of the complete PLAD model with the proposed PLAD model and components of the PLAD model have been addressed. In addition, some lessons learned and recommendations for improvement have been presented. Finally, the strengths and weaknesses of the PLAD model have been discussed. The conclusions and recommendations of this research study will be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter, conclusions are drawn from the findings, implications for learner autonomy development with the PLAD model, limitations of the study, and recommendations for further research are presented to give an overall picture of the current study and to provide possible recommendations for English language teaching in a similar context as well as for future research associated with the focus of this study.

6.1 Conclusions

The findings address three main points (e.g., learner autonomy development, writing competence improvement, and learners' perceptions of the PLAD model and factors influencing their support for or resistance to promoting learner autonomy through the use of a portfolio in a writing course) which are summarized based on the three research questions as follows.

First of all, it was discovered that learner autonomy in relation to the three dimensions of *knowledge*, *awareness*, and *skills* was developed after the 15-week writing course in which a portfolio was used as a learning and assessment tool. In particular, there was a significant improvement in the participants' *knowledge*, *awareness*, and *skills* of learner autonomy after the course, of which *awareness* of learner autonomy was the highest rated dimension. Among the autonomous learning tasks (e.g., setting learning goals, creating a study plan, choosing learning materials,

self-assessing writing performance, and writing reflections), writing reflections was the task that the participants had the best understanding of, held positive attitudes toward, and were most capable of, whereas self-assessing writing performance was found to be the most challenging task. It can be inferred that the participants were probably aware of the necessity of learner autonomy, especially writing reflections.

Second, it was evident that the participants' writing competence improved after the application of the PLAD model in the writing course based on a comparison of the results of the mid-term and the final test. These showed that the final scores were significantly higher than the mid-term scores. In addition, the writing strategies employed by the participants throughout the course were investigated to find out their most preferred strategies. Writing strategies were divided into three dimensions: Cognitive, affective, and sociocultural-interactive. The findings demonstrate that cognitive strategies involve two issues: Assuring coherence and cohesion in writing and translating ideas from L1 (Vietnamese) into L2 (English); affective strategies concerned avoiding making mistakes, (i.e., learners avoid using idioms, collocations and complex structures because these are too challenging for them); and sociocultural-interactive strategies refer to working with peers and/or the teacher.

Last but not least, the participants had positive attitudes toward the writing course in general and the PLAD model in particular. Obviously, most of them would like to have continued to take the writing course with the use of a portfolio to develop their learner autonomy. In essence, the participants agreed that the PLAD model steps (e.g., setting learning goals, choosing resources, creating a study plan, and writing reflections, conducting peer assessment and conducting teacher assessment) helped to promote learner autonomy except in the area of self-assessment. In fact, the participants

felt doubtful about the necessity and effectiveness of self-assessment if it was not accompanied with teacher assessment. The reasons for and against the PLAD model were categorized into two opposing sides: (1) supportive factors (e.g., developed skills and awareness of learner autonomy, positive feedback on portfolio, necessity of collaborative learning, non-threatening learning atmosphere and teacher's autonomy-oriented role) and (2) constraints (e.g., learning behaviors; doubt about the usefulness of portfolio, disadvantages of collaborative learning, inconvenient learning conditions, and teacher as an assessor).

In general, the earlier-mentioned positive evidence found in this study leads to the conclusion that the implementation of the PLAD model in an EFL writing course helps the learners to develop not only their autonomous learning but also their writing competence. It can therefore be said that the PLAD model more or less contributes to the field of learner autonomy research in general and to the development of learner autonomy in language education in this EFL context. The following section offers guidelines to help EFL teachers to make the best use of the PLAD model.

6.2 Pedagogical Implications for Learner Autonomy Development

To implement the PLAD model in an EFL writing course successfully, some suggestions for learners, teachers and administrators will be offered in detail.

6.2.1 Learners

EFL learners should actively take control of their own learning. They first need to change their attitudes to autonomous learning. This means that they should believe in autonomous learning for its own sake. In fact, the findings of this study demonstrate that the participants' awareness of learner autonomy played a fundamental role in

developing learner autonomy. If learners are willing to learn autonomously, they gain the first level of learner autonomy (Nunan, 1997). Then the learners should equip themselves with the necessary knowledge and skills for learner autonomy, i.e., they learn how to set their learning goals, how to create a study plan, and how to write reflections in order to become autonomous learners. At the highest level of learner autonomy, according to Nunan (1997), a learner can work outside of the classroom absolutely independently of the teacher. However, with regard to this study, the participants were not familiar with autonomous learning, hence they were not able to be totally independent of their teacher. Lastly, the learners also need to get involved in making decisions related to the learning process, such as learning content, learning methods, and learning activities, so that they can acquire the confidence to become autonomous learners.

6.2.2 Teachers

Not only do EFL learners need to change their beliefs in learning methods, but teachers should also try to change the common belief that teachers need to be responsible for learners' learning outcomes. To this end, instead of doing most of the learning tasks for the learners, such as setting learning goals, creating a study plan, conveying knowledge to the learners, and assessing learners' learning performance, teachers should let the learners take responsibility for their own learning. This means that there should be a shift in terms of a teacher's role from a leader and a knowledge provider to a guide, a mentor, and a resource.

In addition, EFL teachers should be trained how to use the PLAD model. To ensure that EFL teachers are competent in carrying out their work in an autonomous classroom, they need to be clear about the characteristics of the PLAD model steps and

possess the necessary autonomous learning skills to help their learners to become autonomous learners.

EFL teachers should also be prepared to create a suitable learning environment. First, they should try to provide a pressure-free learning environment in which EFL learners feel free to interact with their teacher. In terms of personality, therefore, an EFL teacher should be friendly, enthusiastic, and considerate. In respect of their teaching practice, it is recommended that EFL teachers should react positively to learners' mistakes or misunderstandings, i.e., they should try not to demotivate learners, and an EFL teacher ought not to put much pressure on learners, especially with regard to the giving of grades. Last but not least, freedom to make decisions about their own learning needs to be offered to EFL learners.

6.2.3 Administrators

Professional development courses, seminars, or conferences regarding learner autonomy and the PLAD model should be offered to EFL teachers to raise their awareness and improve their knowledge of learner autonomy. They will then be more confident about how to develop learner autonomy in their classrooms.

Facilities should be improved to enable learners to learn by themselves. The findings show that the unsuitable learning condition in this context partly influences their autonomous learning. As far as learning resources are concerned, the self-access center located in the university library should be open regularly with WiFi available so that EFL learners have a suitable environment for autonomous learning. The library service should also be improved in order to make it easier for students to find suitable learning materials, in particular, there should be more books and articles relating to English language studies, English magazines and newspapers, and English movies. In

essence, an online service system (e.g., e-database, e-books, and e-reference) should be established and efficiently operated to meet the requirements of EFL learners in the context of 21st century English language education.

Another important issue concerns the learning program. The curriculum in terms of learning content, materials, allotted time, and especially assessment should be open. EFL learners should have considerable freedom to choose what they wish to learn instead of having to follow a prescribed course rigidly. This means that the objectives of the course remain unchanged, yet learners can choose which learning materials to study in order to achieve the objectives. The textbook should serve as a guideline which provides EFL learners with basic knowledge. Regarding the content in the textbook, answer keys and explanations should be available to students so that they are able to learn by themselves. Furthermore, EFL learners should be free to search for any kinds of materials that relate to the content of the textbook. It is important that they have the freedom to skip or supplement the content of the textbook if they feel it is insufficient or not useful to them. To ensure the appropriateness of learners' decisions on learning content, there should be discussions with their peers and/or their teacher.

In lieu of focusing on teacher assessment, moreover, EFL learners should be encouraged and provided with opportunities to assess their learning performance on their own. The results of this study indicate that it was the lack of confidence in their language proficiency and assessment skills that prevented the participants from being able to self-assess their writing pieces properly. In order to help learners to gain confidence in self-assessment, EFL learners should be trained in assessment skills from the beginning of the course, and self-assessment should be frequently conducted as a

task in the language classroom during the course. This means that self-assessment should be regarded as a process and not as a product.

6.3 Limitations

In spite of the success of this study, there remain some limitations. The first limitation is related to extraneous variables (e.g., the fixed learning program, the influence of traditional learning methods, and the learning situation). As analyzed and discussed in the previous chapters, one of the major obstacles to choosing learning content is a fixed learning program. Therefore, learners should be free to choose any type of learning materials (i.e., reference materials) except for the core book, which somehow demotivates learners because only the individual learner knows what they like and how to decide on what they need to learn (Nunan, 1996). Aside from learning content, grade-focused assessment in which learners are required to take a mid-term and final test for a summative evaluation by an EFL teacher seems to be contrary to the nature of autonomous learning in which self-assessment is emphasized. Furthermore, the traditional learning methods in which an EFL teacher plays a key role in the classroom has certain impacts on the learners' autonomous learning, especially, their awareness of autonomy. In fact, it is not an easy task to replace familiar teaching methods with totally new ones. The last extraneous variable influencing learner autonomy development is the learning situation. The findings clearly show that it was the inconvenience of the learning facilities and the insufficiency of the learning resources that prevented the participants from being able to develop their learner autonomy. The second limitation is research bias. This means that the researcher was in charge of the experimental teaching because she would like to ensure that the PLAD

model, which was totally new the teachers in this context, was fully implemented. However, this limitation to some extent affects the validity and reliability of the study. The third limitation is associated with the delivery of the questionnaire. Specifically, the researcher delivered the questionnaire to the participants at the end of the course, and let them self-assess and compare their autonomy before and after the course. It seems that it was quite difficult for the participants to recall their levels of autonomy before the course when they answered the questionnaire at the end of the course. However, the researcher encountered some problems when she delivered the questionnaire to the students at the beginning as the pre-test questionnaire and at the end of the course as the post-test questionnaire in the pilot study. For example, the students reported that they were not certain about their levels of autonomy although they knew about autonomous learning tasks through the pre-training. As a consequence, they ticked the answers unconsciously, which more or less affected the validity and reliability of the study.

6.4 Recommendations for Further Research

Given the implications of this study for the development of learner autonomy and the limitations of this study, there are some possible suggestions for future research which are as follows.

Apart from the research instruments used in this study, classroom observation conducted by a teacher researcher should be employed as a source of data to obtain more evidence of the development of learner autonomy from different points of view.

Furthermore, the relationship between learner autonomy and writing competence achieved by the participants by the end of the course should be further explored in order to see whether or not there is a correlation between them.

It is also suggested that the PLAD model should be adjusted for other courses other than the essay writing course (e.g., reading, listening, speaking) to see whether or not the PLAD model is feasible and flexible enough for different situations.

In addition, levels of autonomy (e.g., *awareness, involvement, intervention, creation, and transcendence*) presented by Nunan (1997) should be implemented in a real class to assess the development of learner autonomy.

Finally, further research should examine the impact of e-portfolios on learner autonomy in an EFL writing course.

6.5 Summary

This chapter first presented the conclusions of the research findings and the PLAD model. The conclusions were followed by the pedagogical implications for developing learner autonomy (e.g., recommendations for learners, teachers, and administrators). Then the limitations of the study were acknowledged. Finally, recommendations for further research were made.

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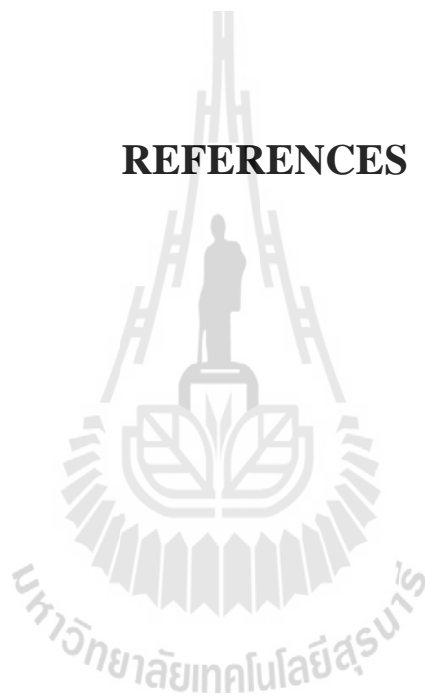
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APPENDICES
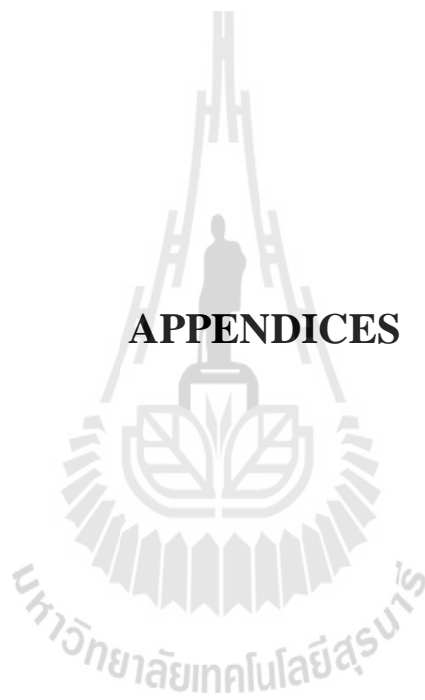
APPENDIX A

PLAD MODEL REVIEW FORM

Research Title: *A Portfolio-based Learner Autonomy Development (PLAD) Model*

                      in an   EFL Writing Course

Objectives: - To evaluate the appropriateness of PLAD model

                 - To give recommendations for a complete model

Reviewer's name: _____

Highest degree: ☐ M.A.   ☐ Ph.D.

Nationality: ☐ Chinese   ☐ Thai   ☐ Vietnamese

Please rate how appropriate the steps of PLAD model are by ticking (✔) the box, and

all your suggestions and comments are highly appreciated.

Step 1: *Portfolio tasks* This step includes:	Appropriate	Inappropriate
• various pieces of writing (the first draft, the revised drafts, the final draft)		
• self-assessment (e.g., editor's checklist, writing assessment rubric)		
• reflection (e.g., writing logs, reports on likes and dislikes of the course)		
Suggestions:……………………………………………………………………………………		

Step 2: *Input* This step equips learners with …	Appropriate	Inappropriate
• text knowledge (e.g., mode/type of essay)		
• writing strategy knowledge (e.g., planning, drafting, revising, etc.)		
• learner autonomy knowledge (e.g., the nature of learner autonomy, advantages of learner autonomy, and levels of autonomy)		
• portfolio knowledge (e.g., components and advantages)		
• willingness (e.g., motivation and confidences)		
Suggestions:………………………………………………………………………………		
Step 3: *Setting goals* Learners set their own learning goals …	Appropriate	Inappropriate
• on the basis of need analysis, existing knowledge, and willingness		
• based on those provided by the textbook		
Suggestions:………………………………………………………………………………		
Step 4: *Creating a study plan* Learners need to …	Appropriate	Inappropriate
• restate learning goals		
• identify time to achieve these goals		
• identify kind of activities		

	Appropriate	Inappropriate
• identify materials and equipments		
• identify learning styles		
• create a detailed study plan for each unit		
Suggestions:…………………………………………………………………………………………		
Step 5: *Selecting resources* Learners need to …	**Appropriate**	**Inappropriate**
• identify the purpose of a writing task		
• find materials supporting the writing task from various sources with the teacher's guide		
• work in pair or group to share information found		
Suggestions:…………………………………………………………………………………………		
Step 6: *Employing writing strategies* Learners need to know …	**Appropriate**	**Inappropriate**
• how to brainstorm ideas		
• how to make an outline		
• how to produce an essay		
• how to reflect on their own writing		
• how to revise their own writing		
• how to edit their own writing		
Suggestions:…………………………………………………………………………………………		
Step 7: *Self-assess writing performance* Learners need to …	**Appropriate**	**Inappropriate**

	Appropriate	Inappropriate
• do the self-evaluation form concerning learning needs and writing performance		
• write a reflective journal for each unit and an end-of-course reflective essay		
Suggestions:…………………………………………………………………………………		
Step 8: *Self-monitoring learning process*	**Appropriate**	**Inappropriate**
• This step needs to be interrelated with the other steps (steps 3 → 8)		
• The elements of portfolios concerning cognition, affection, and revision should be included in this step		
Suggestions:…………………………………………………………………………………		
Step 9: *External feedback from peers/teacher*	**Appropriate**	**Inappropriate**
• Learners are required to give feedback to their peers for each unit in class		
• Learners have a discussion about each other's reviews		
• The teacher plays a role as a coordinator who collects and distributes learners' writing pieces		
• The teacher also gives learners counseling when necessary		

	Appropriate	Inappropriate
• The external feedback from peers/teacher concerns not only linguistic features but also learning resources found by learners		
Suggestions:……………………………………………………………………………………		
Step 10: *Delayed Evaluation and formative feedback*	**Appropriate**	**Inappropriate**
• Delayed evaluation provides learners with opportunities to review the written work before summative evaluation		
• Formative feedback involves reviewing how to deal with portfolio tasks, learning goals, use of writing strategies		
Suggestions:……………………………………………………………………………………		
Step 11: *Output* Learners need to possess …	**Appropriate**	**Inappropriate**
• an ability to learn autonomously (i.e., self-monitor their learning process and self-manage their learning)		
• an ability to write different types of essays		
• an ability to develop and utilize a portfolio		
Suggestions:……………………………………………………………………………………		
Step 12: *Summative evaluation* The summative evaluation is …	**Appropriate**	**Inappropriate**
• conducted by the teacher		

• independent from learner autonomy development process		
Suggestions:…………………………………………………………………………………		
General		**remarks**:

…………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

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Thank you for your help

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Brief analysis of PLAD model review

The PLAD model review form aiming to obtain experts' evaluation in terms of the feasibility of the PLAD model steps consists of two parts: (1) general introduction of the research project and reviewers (e.g., name, nationality, & highest degree) and (2) review content that contains twelve steps with closed-ended and open-ended items. The closed-ended items were designed with two-point scale, namely *appropriate* and *inappropriate*, whereas open-ended items were employed for suggestion.

Regarding choosing experts for review, there are four main criteria. First, experts must be interested in learner autonomy. Second, they must be experienced EFL teachers who hold at least Master's degree. Thirdly, they must know about ISD model development. Lastly, they must belong to different EFL contexts. Given these criteria, three experts, including one Chinese, one Thai, and one Vietnamese were invited for the PLAD model review with the detailed description illustrated in the following table.

Table: PLAD model reviewers' general information

(N = 3)							
Gender		**Nationality**			**Highest degree**		
Male	*Female*	*Chinese*	*Thai*	*Vietnamese*	*M.A.*	*Ph.D.*	*Other*
1	2	1	1	1	0	3	0

Overall, the findings indicated hat all three experts agreed with the appropriateness of the PLAD model steps. Nevertheless, it was suggested that reflection in step (8) should be put more emphasis to see learner autonomy development by the Thai expert. In addition, the Vietnamese expert recommended that the model should be general and simple with a few main components each of which may contain sub-components. The PLAD model was then modified based on the findings.

APPENDIX B

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Subject: Writing III

Textbook: Effective Academic Writing 2

Instructor: Duong My Tham, M.A.

Course objectives: This course is designed to provide students with opportunities to practise autonomous learning and English writing skills. By the end of the course, it is expected that through the writing practices, students should be able to:

- write an essay with different types

- self-monitor their learning process

- deploy a portfolio as a learning and assessment tool in a writing course

Requirements:

- *Preparation and class participation*: The focus of the course is on student-centeredness; thus, it is absolutely necessary for students to prepare the lesson beforehand so that you can participate in class discussions. The students are encouraged to ask questions for peers and/or teachers because it is a part of formative scores.

- *Attendance*: You have to attend a succession of 15 class meetings in one semester. In case of absence, students need to ask the teacher for permission. Students should also keep in mind that "**Punctuality is the best policy**" during the course. Remember that you will not be able to take the final test if your

absence exceeds 6 periods (2 class meetings), and your absence more or less

affects your final scores since it is also a part of formative scores.

Teaching and learning methods:

+ Group presentation and discussion

+ Individual project

Evaluation:

(1) Attendance   10%

(2) Presentation 10%

(3) Assignments   20%

(4) Mid-term test 30%

(5) Final test   30%

Detailed course procedure

Week	Unit	Topic/Content	Writing Activity	Learner autonomy	Portfolio
0	*Pre-training*	*Learner autonomy, writing skills & portfolios*	The nature of writing	The concept of learner autonomy	The use of a portfolio
1	*Pre-training*	*Learner autonomy, writing skills & portfolios*	Writing process: • Prewriting • Planning	Do the following tasks with the help of the teacher: • Set goals	1. Reflection and self-assessment: • Self-assess writing pieces
2	Unit 1 (cont.)	*Paragraph to short essay*	• Drafting • Reflecting		• Reflect on the whole unit (what

No.	Unit	Topic	Activities	Tasks	Reflection
3	Unit 2	*Descriptive essays*	• Peer reviewing	• Create a study plan	they have gained, comparison/ contrast with previous ones, difficulties, & suggestions)
4	Unit 2 (cont.)	*Descriptive essays*	• Revising • Editing and proofreading	• Select materials	
5	Unit 2 (cont.)	*Descriptive essays*	Learning activities:	• Self-assess their writing performance	2. Collection: Put all documents and artifacts into a portfolio
6	Unit 4	*Opinion essays*	• Group discussion	• Reflect on their learning	
7	Unit 4 (cont.)	*Opinion essays*	• Group work		
8	Unit 4 (cont.)	*Opinion essays*	• Individual project		
9	**Mid-term test**				
10	Unit 5	*Comparison and contrast essays*	Writing process:	Do the following tasks by themselves:	1. Reflection and self-assessment:
11	Unit 5 (cont.)	*Comparison and contrast essays*	• Prewriting • Planning • Drafting	• Set goals • Create a study plan	• Self-assess writing pieces • Reflect on the
12	Unit 5 (cont.)	*Comparison and contrast essays*	• Reflecting • Peer reviewing	• Select materials	whole unit (what they have gained, comparison/
13	Unit 6	*Cause and effect essays*	• Revising		contrast with

14	Unit 6 (cont.)	*Cause and effect essays*	• Editing and proofreading	• Self-assess their writing performance	previous ones, difficulties, & suggestions)
15	Unit 6 (cont.)	*Cause and effect essays*	Learning activities: • Group discussion • Group work • Individual project	• Reflect on their learning	• Reflect on likes and dislikes throughout the course 2. Collection: Put all documents and artifacts into a portfolio
16	***Final test***				

APPENDIX C

LEARNING STYLES

How do you like to learn?

For each of the following types score yourself 0, 1, 2, or 3 in the brackets to show how you like to learn best

0 = not at all 1 = occasionally 2 = usually 3 = always	
Type 1: I like to learn…	
• by listening to native speakers.	[ ]
• by talking to friends in English.	[ ]
• by watching TV and/or videotapes in English at home.	[ ]
• by using English out of class.	[ ]
• English words by hearing them.	[ ]
• by having conversations.	[ ]
TOTAL	[ ]
Type 2: I like…	
• the teacher to explain everything to me.	[ ]
• to write everything in my notebook.	[ ]
• to have my own textbook.	[ ]
• to learn by reading in class.	[ ]
• to study grammar.	[ ]

• to learn English words by seeing them.	[ ]
TOTAL	[ ]
Type 3: I like to …	
• learn by playing games in class.	[ ]
• learn by looking at pictures, films, and videotapes in class.	[ ]
• learn English by talking in pairs.	[ ]
• learn by using audiotapes at home.	[ ]
• listen to and use audiotapes in class.	[ ]
• go out with classmates and practice English.	[ ]
TOTAL	[ ]
Type 4: I like…	
• to study grammar.	[ ]
• to learn by studying English books at home.	[ ]
• to study English by myself (alone).	[ ]
• the teacher to let me find my mistakes.	[ ]
• the teacher to give us problems to work on.	[ ]
• to learn by reading newspapers at home.	[ ]
TOTAL	[ ]

(adapted from Nunan, 1996)

Look at the descriptions as follows:

Type 1: If you have a high score in this section, you are probably a good communicator. You enjoy interacting with people and using the English you have learned in a natural way.

Type 2: If you have a high score in this section, you probably enjoy learning English in class. You like the teacher to lead you through learning the language.

Type 3: If you have a high score in this section, you probably enjoy learning English by examples. You like learning with other people and you see learning a language as fun.

Type 4: If you have a high score in this section, you probably like learning English by studying it in detail. You like to work by yourself and find out how to use the language on your own.

You may find that you do not fit neatly into any one of the above categories. If so, write out the statements that are most true for you, then try to write a description of yourself as a language learner.
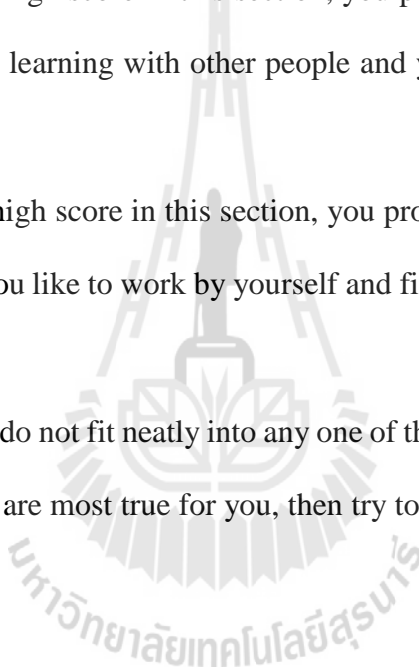
APPENDIX D

A SAMPLE ESSAY WRITING LOG

Name:

Student code:

Wk	Weekly goals	Date	How much time will I spend?	How can I achieve my goal? (*Strategies*)	*Reflection*: How did I do? What did I learn? What was great? what can I do better next week?
1	Get 70 new words in IELTS	7/3-13/3	30mins/day	Learn by heart	Result: Get 20 new words Reason: Lazy, procrastinating Solution: spend more time to learn vocabulary and try to be more focused Punishment: not go out this Saturday
	Grammar: Subject-verb agreement	9/3-15/3	30mins/day	Do grammar exercises in the book	Result: Use grammatical points perfectly Feeling: more confident Reward: read a novel on Friday night
	Review how to write a paragraph	9/3-15/3	30mins/day	Read the previous writing book	Result: read and remember the way to write a paragraph. Feeling: proud of myself (because I follow my schedule well) Reward: Watch Cenderella in the cinema

APPENDIX E

WRITING STRATEGIES

1. CONTENT
1. I list down words, phrases and short notes related to the topic.
2. I read and collect information related to the topic from different sources.
3. I discuss the topic with others (e.g., my teacher, classmates, etc.).
4. I stop after each sentence or paragraph to relate ideas together and get more new ideas.
5. I write the ideas in Vietnamese and then translate it into English.
Other:
2. ORGANIZATION
6. I change my initial ideas and write new ideas if the ideas are not clearly stated.
7. I rearrange sentences and/or paragraphs to make ideas clear.
8. I focus on the layout of my writing.
9. I imitate the available pattern of essay organization.
Other:
3. VOCABULARY
10. If I do not know a word in English, I stop writing and look up the word in a dictionary.
11. I delete or change a word, a phrase or a sentence when the meaning is not clear.
12. I use proverbs and good expressions to enhance and improve my writing.
13. I use synonyms and antonyms to develop vocabulary.

14. I search for collocation online or through dictionaries to improve my writing.
Other:
4. LANGUAGE USE
15. I try to write an accurate and perfect sentence before I write another sentence.
16. I constantly check grammar.
17. I imitate good English structures.
18. I try to make use of complex grammatical structures to improve my writing.
19. I use a tool to check grammar online or in Microsoft office Word.
Other:
5. MECHANICS
20. I delete or change a word, a phrase or a sentence when I am not sure about spelling.
21. I improve mechanics through dictation of English texts.
22. I read and reread my writing to check spelling, punctuation, paragraphing, and capitalization.
23. I use a tool to check spelling online or in Microsoft office Word.
24. I ask my classmate to proofread my writing.
Other:

(adapted from Alnufaie & Grenfell, 2012)

APPENDIX F

A SAMPLE LESSON PLAN

BEFORE THE CLASS
Learners will do these steps before the class starts: • get some necessary issues from the pre-training and notice documents (e.g., writing drafts, a writing log, artifacts, etc.) for the portfolio (***Steps 1&2***)   • read Unit 4 to have knowledge of its content (***Step 3***)   • set their own short-term goals for this unit (***Step 4***)   • create a study plan to achieve these learning goals (***Step 5***)   • find and select usable materials (e.g., photos, articles, etc.) regarding an important invention to their life prior to class time (***Step 6***)   • Employ the writing process as follows (***Step 7***):
WEEK 10
Part 1: Stimulating ideas Duration: 60 minutes Purposes: ✓ To connect learners' ideas with their own existing knowledge and experience   ✓ To generate ideas

Teacher's tasks	Learners' tasks

	Learners can choose one of the following options:
• Help learners if they have some questions	• Discuss the picture and the content of the passage with partners in the textbook with partners • Discuss the pictures of changes (e.g., technology, education, economics, etc.) with partners • Choose and play a video regarding changes and discuss the content of the video then
	Learners can choose one of the following options:
• Confirm that mistakes do not matter.	• Discuss their own inventions in pair or group of three using pictures and information prepared beforehand. Then write about a specific invention that has changed their own life in ten to fifteen minutes • Present their own inventions in group or pair using PowerPoint slides. Then write about a specific invention that has changed their own life in ten to fifteen minutes

Part 2:Brainstorming and outlining

Duration: 90 minutes

Purposes:

   ✓ To brainstorm ideas and vocabulary for an essay they are going to write

   ✓ To get the knowledge of opinion organization

   ✓ To make an outline for an essay

Brainstorming ideas	*Learners can choose one of the following options:*
• Go around and give advice when necessary on how to write their ideas properly.	• Read the opinions presented in the chart and make notes in the *Agree* or *Disagree* columns. Then write an opinion about the important invention that is mentioned in exercise 5 (p. 83) in the middle column; write arguments that agree with the opinion on the left; and write arguments that disagree with the opinion on the right • Make a mind map. An opinion about the important invention mentioned in exercise 5 (p. 83) is written in the

	center circle of the mind map, and arguments that agree with the opinion and that disagree with the opinion are written around the center circle
Break	
Brainstorming vocabulary • Go around and give comments on learners' word choice when needed	*Learners can choose one of the following options:* • Circle the words they would like to use in the given task and then write two more words in the blanks • Prepare vocabulary that they like to use in a writing task at home (e.g., positive changes, negative changes, relationships, and results) and share with group members in class
• Provide constructive feedback to the learners' presentation or mind map	*Learners can choose one of the following options:* • Group work (1): - Present the rhetorical focus in terms of opinion organization using Powerpoint slides - Instruct the audience to analyze a student essay entitled "*What can space exploration do for me?*" by answering the questions in exercises 3 & 4 - Q & A • Group work (1): - Present the rhetorical focus in terms of opinion organization using Powerpoint slides - Use an opinion essay that they find for analysis to illustrate their presentation - Q & A • Group work (1): - Discuss the rhetorical focus in terms of opinion organization, make a mind map and present it

	- Analyze a student essay entitled "*What can space exploration do for me?*" by answering the questions in exercises 3 & 4
	• Group work (1):
	- Discuss the rhetorical focus in terms of opinion organization, make a mind map, and present it
	- Use an opinion essay that they find for analysis to illustrate the mind map
• Go around and observe the learners' writing performance	• Make an outline for an essay that they are going to write later based on the form available in the textbook or that from other resources they search for
• Listen and answer possible questions	• Review what they have learned
	• Put the review into the portfolio
	• Make questions about the learned or new lessons if necessary
WEEK 11	

Part 3: Developing your ideas

Duration: 90 minutes

Purposes:

- ✓ To get the knowledge of facts and opinions and counter-argument and refutation
- ✓ To produce a first draft
- ✓ To reflect on their own writing
- ✓ To review their writing by peers
- ✓ To revise the writing after peer review

| • Help learners if they have problems | • Discuss their homework that should be finished prior to class time with partners |

	Learners can choose one of the following options:
• Provide constructive feedback to the learners' presentation	• Group work (2): - Present the difference between facts and opinions available in the textbook - Guide the audience to interpret the facts to support opinions - Help the audience recognize counter-arguments and refutations - Illustrate the points with some examples - Q&A • Group work (2): - Present an essay that they find from other resources to elaborate the difference between facts and opinions - Guide the audience to interpret the facts to support opinions - Help the audience recognize counter-arguments and refutations - Q&A
• Go around and observe the learners' writing performance. .	• Write a first draft based on the outline generated in part 2 and the ideas and knowledge gained in part 3 • Self-assess their own writing using editor's checklist and revise it • Check each other's drafts (peer review) for the organization and clarity of ideas using editor's checklist and give feedback to the written work • Make another draft by reorganizing and refining ideas with the peer review

	• Reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their first draft and the peer review. • Put the documents (e.g., the reflection sheet, the first draft, and the peer review) in the portfolio
Break	

Part 4:Editing your writing

Duration: 60 minutes

Purposes:

✓ To edit the writing focusing on grammatical trouble spots/ grammatical errors

✓ To edit the writing and produce the final draft

	Learners can choose one of the following options:
• Provide constructive feedback to the learners' presentation	• Group work (3): - Use PowerPoint slides to present the language focus regarding the use of quantity expressions in opinion essays and the use of connectors to show support and opposition - Provide the audience with exercises online for practice - Q&A • Group work (3): - Use the blackboard to present the language focus regarding the use of quantity expressions in opinion essays and the use of connectors to show support and opposition - Provide exercises for the audience - Q&A
• Go around to observe learners' writing and assessment	***Step 8: Self-assessment*** • Edit their own essay using the self-assessment checklist. ***Step 9: Self-monitoring learning process***

	• Revise the essay after self-assessment and reflect on their writing performance
• Answer possible questions	• Review what they have learned • Make questions about the learned or new lessons if necessary
WEEK 12	

Part 5:Put it all together
 	
Duration: 150 minutes
 	
Purposes:
 	
   ✓ To summarize the other parts of the unit
   ✓ To assess the learners' writing performance
   ✓ To wrap up the lesson learned	

Step 10: **External feedback** • Help learners if they have problems	*Step 10:* **External feedback** • Assess peers' writing pieces in group using the peer assessment checklist

• Go around to observe learners' writing performance	*Step 11: Output*
	
	• Write a timed essay with the same rhetorical focus but on a different topic which they choose from a variety of the provided topics:
	
	  - *A school policy that you agree with or disagree with*
	  - *The best solution to overcoming traffic problems in your study*
	  - *The biggest mistake that a college student can make*
	  - *The ideal husband or wife*
	  - *Testing in school*
	  - *Children and the Internet*

Break	
• Give learners time to write reflection	*Step 11: Output*

	• Write reflection about Unit 4 (e.g., '*How did I do?*', '*What did I learn?*', '*What was great?*', '*What can I do better next week?*')
Step 12: Summative evaluation • Collect some portfolios for assessment and give comments on the portfolios	**Step 11: Output** • Put all drafts, reflections, and relevant documents in the portfolios for assessment using the portfolio checklist

APPENDIX G

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LEARNERS

Dear participant,

    This questionnaire is a part of a study entitled *"A Portfolio-based Learner Autonomy Development Model in an EFL Writing Course"*. This questionnaire aims to explore EFL learners' perceptions of the development of their autonomy through the use of portfolios in an EFL writing course and writing strategies employed in their writing. We would highly appreciate it if you could give your responses for the following questions. Your answers will contribute to the success of the research. The data collected are used in the research paper only, not for any other purposes. Thank you so much for your cooperation.

I. Personal Information

Please provide your own information by putting a cross (x) in the box.

1. Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

2. How much have you known about "learner autonomy" before this writing course?

☐ not at all ☐ a little ☐ average ☐ a lot ☐ very much

*If you choose the last **four** items, please answer the following questions*:

    2a. How did you gain the knowledge about learner autonomy?

    ……………………………………………………………………………………

    2b. How long did it take you to do so? ………………………………………

3. How have you learned English writing before? (your roles and your teacher's roles)

……………………………………………………………………………………

II. Self-assessment of autonomous learning

Please rate these statements by writing down the level at which you have gained and then provide justification for each statement.

1= not at all 2 = a little 3 = average 4 = a lot 5 = very much			
KNOWLEDGE			
I know about…	*Before*	*Now*	*Justification*
1. setting your own goals of the writing course			
2. creating a study plan			
3. choosing materials for the writing course			
4. self-assessing your own writing			
5. reflecting on your own learning			
AWARENESS			
I am aware of…	*Before*	*Now*	*Justification*
1. setting your own goals of the writing course			
2. creating a study plan			
3. choosing materials for the writing course			

4. self-assessing your own writing			
5. reflecting on your own learning			
SKILLS			
I can…	*Before*	*Now*	*Justification*
1. setting your own goals of the writing course			
2. creating a study plan			
3. choosing materials for the writing course			
4. self-assessing your own writing			
5. reflecting on your own learning			

III. Writing strategies

Please rate these statements by writing down the level at which you have gained and

then provide justification for each statement.

1 = never	2 = rarely	3 = sometimes	4 = often	5 = always

How often do you use these writing strategies?		
CONTENT	*Level*	*Justification*
1. I list down words, phrases and short notes related to the topic.		
2. I read and collect information related to the topic from different sources.		
3. I discuss the topic with others (e.g., my teacher, classmates, etc.).		
4. I stop after each sentence or paragraph to relate ideas together and get more new ideas.		
5. I write the ideas in Vietnamese and then translate it into English.		
Other:		
ORGANIZATION	*Level*	*Justification*
6. I change my initial ideas and write new ideas if the ideas are not clearly stated.		
7. I rearrange sentences and/or paragraphs to make ideas clear.		

	Level	Justification
8. I focus on the layout of my writing.		
9. I imitate the available pattern of essay organization.		
10. I follow the organization of each essay type presented in the textbook.		
Other:		
VOCABULARY	*Level*	*Justification*
11. If I do not know a word in English, I stop writing and look up the word in a dictionary.		
12. I delete or change a word, a phrase or a sentence when the meaning is not clear.		
13. I use proverbs and good expressions to enhance and improve my writing.		
14. I use synonyms and antonyms to develop vocabulary.		
15. I search for collocation online or through dictionaries to improve my writing.		
Other:		
LANGUAGE USE	*Level*	*Justification*
16. I try to write an accurate and perfect sentence before I write another sentence.		

17. I constantly check grammar.		
18. I imitate good English structures.		
19. I try to make use of complex grammatical structures to improve my writing.		
20. I use transition markers (e.g., prepositions and conjunctions) to create transitions within and between sentences.		
Other:		

MECHANICS	*Level*	*Justification*
21. I delete or change a word, a phrase or a sentence when I am not sure about spelling.		
22. I improve mechanics through dictation of English texts.		
23. I read and reread my writing to check spelling, punctuation, paragraphing, and capitalization.		
24. I use a tool to check spelling through AutoCorrect options in Microsoft Word.		
25. I ask my classmate to proofread my writing.		
Other:		

IV. Factors influencing learner autonomy development throughout the writing course

Please rate these statements by putting a cross (x) in the box.

1. Do you think that the following steps help to improve your autonomous learning skill?

	Yes	*No*
• Setting learning objectives	☐	☐
• Creating a study plan	☐	☐
• Choosing learning materials	☐	☐
• Self-assessment	☐	☐
• Peer assessment	☐	☐
• Teacher assessment	☐	☐
• Reflection	☐	☐

2. Do you like to use a portfolio to develop learner autonomy in the writing course?

☐ Yes   ☐ No   ☐ Neither yes nor no

3. What do you think about this portfolio-based writing course?

....
...
....
...
....
...

-The end-

PHIẾU KHẢO SÁT (Vietnamese version)

Chào Anh/Chị,

Chúng tôi đang thực hiện một nghiên cứu với tên đề tài là "Xây dựng mô hình phát triển khả năng tự học dựa vào việc sử dụng tập hồ sơ (portfolios) trong khóa học viết". Mục đích của phiếu khảo sát này là nhằm tìm hiểu nhận thức của sinh viên chuyên Anh về sự phát triển khả năng tự học thông qua việc sử dụng tập hồ sơ trong khóa học viết và những chiến lược viết họ dùng trong bài viết của mình. Chúng tôi thật sự đánh giá cao sự giúp đỡ của anh/chị bởi vì câu trả lời của anh/chị sẽ đóng góp rất lớn vào thành công của nghiên cứu này. Dữ liệu thu thập từ phiếu khảo sát này không nhằm mục đích nào khác ngoài mục đích nghiên cứu. Cám ơn sự hợp tác của anh/chị.

I. Thông tin cá nhân

Vui lòng cung cấp thông tin của anh/chị bằng cách đánh dấu chéo (X) vào ô thích hợp.

1. Giới tính: ☐ Nam ☐ Nữ

2. Trước khóa học này, bạn đã biết về khái niệm "tự học" ở mức độ nào?

☐ không biết gì cả ☐ biết ít ☐ biết kha khá ☐ biết nhiều ☐ biết rất nhiều

Nếu bạn chọn bốn mục cuối thì vui lòng trả lời các câu hỏi sau đây:

2a. Bạn đã biết đến khái niệm tự học bằng cách nào? …………………………

2b. Bạn đã tiếp nhận kiến thức này trong bao lâu? ……………………………

3. Bạn vui lòng tóm lược phương pháp bạn được dạy kỹ năng viết ở các khóa trước.

………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………

II. Tự đánh giá khả năng tự học

Hãy đánh giá mức độ mà bạn đạt được cho những câu dưới đây và lý giải cho mức độ đó.

1= Không gì cả 2 = không nhiều 3 = kha khá 4 = nhiều 5 = rất nhiều			
KIẾN THỨC			
Tôi có kiến thức về... .	*Trước đây*	*Bây giờ*	*Giải thích*
1. việc lập mục tiêu học tập cho khóa học này			
2. xây dựng kế hoạch học tập cho riêng mình			
3. việc chọn tài liệu học tập cho khóa học này			
4. việc tự đánh giá bài viết của mình			
5. việc tự ngẫm nghĩ về việc học của mình			
Ý THỨC			
Tôi có ý thức về	*Trước đây*	*Bây giờ*	*Giải thích*
1. việc lập mục tiêu học tập cho khóa học này			
2. xây dựng kế hoạch học tập cho riêng mình			
3. việc chọn tài liệu học tập cho khóa học này			
4. việc tự đánh giá bài viết của mình			

5. việc tự ngẫm nghĩ về việc học của mình			
KỸ NĂNG			
Tôi có thể	*Trước đây*	*Bây giờ*	*Giải thích*
1. việc lập mục tiêu học tập cho khóa học này			
2. xây dựng kế hoạch học tập cho riêng mình			
3. chọn tài liệu học tập cho khóa học này			
4. tự đánh giá bài viết của mình			
5. tự ngẫm nghĩ về việc học của mình			

III. Chiến lược viết

Hãy đánh giá mức độ mà bạn đạt được cho những câu dưới đây và lý giải cho mức độ đó.

1 = không bao giờ 2 = hiếm khi 3 = thỉnh thoảng 4 = thường 5 = luôn luôn		
Mức độ sử dụng các chiến lược viết dưới đây của bạn như thế nào?		
NỘI DUNG	*Mức độ*	*Giải thích*
1. Tôi liệt kê từ, cụm từ và những ghi chú ngắn liên quan đến đề tài đang viết.		
2. Tôi đọc và thu thập các dữ liệu liên quan đến đề tài từ nhiều nguồn khác nhau.		
3. Tôi thảo luận với những người khác (ví dụ giáo viên hay bạn cùng lớp) về đề tài.		
4. Sau mỗi câu hay mỗi đoạn, tôi tạm ngưng viết để liên kết các ý và nghĩ thêm ý mới.		
5. Tôi viết ý bằng tiếng Việt sau đó dịch sang tiếng Anh.		
Ý kiến khác:		
BỐ CỤC	*Mức độ*	*Giải thích*
6. Tôi thay đổi ý ban đầu và viết ý mới nếu như những ý đó không rõ ràng.		

7. Tôi sắp xếp lại câu và/hoặc đoạn để làm rõ ý muốn diễn đạt.		
8. Tôi rất chú ý đến bố cục văn bản khi viết.		
9. Tôi tham khảo những bài luận mẫu để học hỏi về bố cục bài viết.		
10. Tôi dựa theo phần bố cục của từng dạng bài luận có sẵn trong sách.		
Ý kiến khác:		
TỪ VỰNG	*Mức độ*	*Giải thích*
11. Nếu tôi không biết một từ mới trong tiếng Anh, tôi ngừng viết và tra từ điển.		
12. Tôi bỏ hoặc thay đổi từ, cụm từ hay câu nào đó nếu nghĩa không rõ ràng.		
13. Tôi dùng thành ngữ và những cụm từ hay để cải thiện bài viết của mình.		
14. Tôi dùng từ đồng nghĩa và trái nghĩa để phát triển vốn từ vựng.		
15. Tôi tìm kiếm những cụm từ hay đi chung với nhau trực tuyến hay thông qua từ điển và dùng chúng để cải thiện bài viết của mình.		
Ý kiến khác:		

NGỮ PHÁP	Mức độ	Giải thích
16. Tôi cố gắng viết một câu hoàn chỉnh và chính xác trước khi qua một câu khác.		
17. Tôi thường xuyên kiểm tra ngữ pháp khi viết.		
18. Tôi bắt chước những cấu trúc câu tiếng Anh hay cho bài viết của mình.		
19. Tôi sử dụng những cấu trúc câu phức tạp để giúp bài viết hay hơn.		
20. Tôi sử dụng từ nối (thường là giới từ và lien từ) để cho bài văn mạch lạc hơn.		
Ý kiến khác:		

CHÍNH TẢ	Mức độ	Giải thích
21. Tôi bỏ hoặc thay đổi từ, cụm từ hay câu nào đó nếu tôi không chắc chắn về chính tả.		
22. Tôi cố gắng cải thiện khả năng chính tả (chính tả, dấu câu, viết hoa, v.v.) thông qua đọc viết chính tả.		
23. Tôi đọc đi đọc lại bài viết để kiểm tra chính tả, dấu câu, viết hoa và quy tắc viết đoạn văn		
24. Tôi sử dụng công cụ kiểm tra chính tả trực tuyến hay trên Microsoft Office Word.		

25. Tôi nhờ bạn cùng lớp đọc và sửa chính tả giúp.		
Ý kiến khác:		

IV. Yếu tố ảnh hưởng đến việc tự học trong khóa học này

Xin vui lòng đánh dấu (x) vào phương án bạn chọn.

1. Những bước sau đây có giúp bạn tăng khả năng tự học không?

	Có	*Không*
• Đặt mục tiêu học tập	☐	☐
• Xây dựng kế hoạch học tập	☐	☐
• Chọn nguồn tham khảo	☐	☐
• Tự đánh giá bài viết của mình	☐	☐
• Bạn cùng lớp đánh giá bài viết của mình	☐	☐
• Giáo viên đánh giá bài viết của mình	☐	☐
• Tự phản ánh những bài đã học	☐	☐

2. Bạn có thích sử dụng tập hồ sơ để tăng cường khả năng tự học trong khóa học viết không?

☐ Có ☐ Không ☐ Không rõ

3. Bạn vui lòng chia sẻ cảm nhận của bạn về khóa học này.

....
....
....
....
....
....
☺ Xin cám ơn ☺

TEST OF WRITING III

Time allotted: 60 minutes

Choose and write on one of the following essay topics. Your essay must be between 350 and 450 words in length.

1. It has been said, "Not everything that is learned is contained in books." Compare and contrast knowledge gained from experience with knowledge gained from books. In your opinion, which source is more important? Why?

2. Describe a custom from your country that you would like people from other countries to adopt.

3. Should violations of traffic regulation be severely punished? What should we do to restore order and reduce accidents in the city streets?

****

<u>*Notes*</u>:

- *The topic must be presented in an academic format*
- *Use specific reasons, examples and supporting details to develop your essay.*
- *Be sure to use a suitable title, good thesis statement and topic sentences, relevant supporting details, and a logical order with transition signals. To this end, try to go through the process of writing before writing the final draft.*
- *Students are not allowed to use dictionary or any other materials.*

Prepared by   Approved by

APPENDIX I

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

I. Autonomous learning skills

1. Do you find setting learning goals helpful for your learning? If so, by what ways? If not, why not?

2. Did you make a plan for your learning such as scheduling what to be done within a week, setting deadline for a learning activity, prioritizing events in personal calendar? Why did (not) you do that? Did it work for your learning? Why or why not?

3. Did you find and select various materials apart from the textbook to accomplish the writing task? If so, where did you often find the information? and how did you choose the most useful materials? If not, what could be your obstacles?

4. Have you ever self-assessed your writing before? In your opinion, what are its advantages and disadvantages? Was it difficult for you to self-assess your our work? If yes, what were your obstacles? If no, what strategies did you use to do it well?

5. Did you check and select your writing pieces carefully before submitting? Do you find it helpful? What motivates you (not) to do so?

6. Did you self-monitor your learning progress, i.e., reflecting on what materials you have found, revising the learning goals, selecting the best pieces of writing,

etc. How often do you do that? Why do (not) you do that? What do you learn from self-monitoring your progress? Can you give some examples?

7. Do you think that you are an autonomous learner now? Can you use the knowledge and experiences of learner autonomy you have gained in this course for other courses?

II. The PLAD model

1. In general, do you think that your autonomous learning skills are developed and your writing competence is improved after the course?

2. Which of the following steps do you like and dislike throughout this course?

   - Setting learning objectives

   - Creating a study plan

   - Choose learning materials

   - Employing writing process

   - Self-assessing writing pieces

   - Reflecting on learning performance

   - Conducting peer assessment

   - Conducting teacher assessment

3. Do you like to use portfolios to develop learner autonomy in the next writing courses?

4. Which of the following may influence your support or resistance to the application of PLAD model in an EFL writing course?

   - Decisions about your learning (e.g., materials, learning methods, learning goals)

- Responsibility for learning

- Motivation and confidence

- Language proficiency and computer skills

- Learning conditions (e.g., facilities, class size)

III. Writing competence

1. Of the aspects (e.g., organization, ideas, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics), what aspect did you find the most difficult to acquire? Why?

2. Do you think that your writing competence is improved through the use of a portfolio? How did it help improve your writing competence?

3. Did you encounter any problems while practicing writing skill with a portfolio as a learning tool? What are they?

CÂU HỎI PHỎNG VẤN (Vietnamese version)

I. Khả năng tự học

1. Bạn có nhận thấy rằng việc lập ra mục tiêu học tập trước một khóa học là hữu ích không? Nếu có thì hữu ích như thế nào? Nếu không thì tại sao không?

2. Bạn có từng lập kế hoạch học tập cho khóa học nào đó trước đây không? Ví dụ như lên kế hoạch sẽ làm gì trong vòng một tuần, đặt hạn cuối cho một hoạt động học tập nào đó, chú thích những sự kiện quan trọng trên lịch cá nhân. Tại sao bạn (không) làm những việc đó? Nó có hiệu quả cho việc học của bạn không? Tại sao?

3. Bạn có từng tìm kiếm và lựa chọn những tài liệu khác nhau để hỗ trợ cho bài viết của mình ngoài sách giáo khoa không? Nếu có thì bạn đã tìm thông tin đó ở đâu? và làm sao bạn có thể chọn các tài liệu tối ưu cho bài viết của mình? Nếu không thì bạn đã gặp những khó khăn gì?

4. Trước đây, bạn có từng tự đánh giá bài viết của mình không? Theo bạn thì việc này có những thuận lợi và bất lợi nào? Bạn có thấy khó khăn khi tự đánh giá bài viết của mình không? Nếu có thì những khó khăn đó là gì? Nếu không, bạn đã dùng chiến lược nào để làm tốt việc này?

5. Bạn có từng tự kiểm tra và chọn những bài viết kỹ lưỡng trước khi nộp? Bạn có thấy điều đó hữu ích không? Điều gì thúc đẩy bạn (không) làm điều đó?

6. Bạn có từng ngẫm nghĩ về việc học của mình hay không (ví như về sự lựa chọn những tài liệu, các chiến lược để viết một bài luận, khả năng viết v.v.)? Bạn làm (những) việc này thường xuyên không? Tại sao bạn (không) làm (những) việc

đó? Bạn đã học được những gì từ việc suy ngẫm về quá trình học tập của mình? Bạn có thể cho ví dụ không?

7. Bây giờ bạn có cho rằng mình đã là người học tự chủ không? Bạn có thể sử dụng kiến thức và kinh nghiệm về sự tự học mà bạn đã nhận được trong khóa học này để ứng dụng cho khóa học khác không?

II. Mô hình phát triển khả năng tự học dựa vào việc sử dụng tập hồ sơ

1. Sau khóa học này, bạn có nhận thấy rằng khả năng tự học và năng lực viết của mình được cải thiện không?

2. Bạn thích và không thích bước nào sau đây trong suốt khóa học này (đặt mục tiêu học tập, xây dựng kế hoạch học tập, chọn nguồn tham khảo, tiến hành các bước để viết một bài luận, tự đánh giá khả năng viết của mình, tự phản ánh những bài đã học, giáo viên đánh giá bài cho mình và đánh giá bài cho bạn của mình)?

3. Bạn có thích sử dụng tập hồ sơ để phát triển khả năng tự học của mình trong những khóa học viết sắp tới không?

4. Những yếu tố nào sau đây ảnh hưởng đến việc bạn thích hay không thích sử dụng tập hồ sơ để tăng cường khả năng tự học trong khóa học viết?

- Những quyết định liên quan đến việc học (ví dụ: tài liệu, phương pháp học, mục đích học tập)

- Tinh thần trách nhiệm đối với việc học

- Động lực và sự tự tin

- Khả năng ngôn ngữ và tin học

- Điều kiện học tập (ví dụ: trang thiết bị học tập, sĩ số lớp học)

III. Năng lực viết

1. Trong các phần (ví dụ bố cục, nội dung, từ vựng, ngữ pháp, và chính tả), phần nào khiến bạn thấy khó khăn nhất? Tại sao?

2. Bạn có nghĩ rằng năng lực viết của mình được phát triển thông qua việc sử dụng tập hồ sơ? Nếu có thì phát triển như thế nào?

3. Bạn có gặp phải bất kì khó khăn nào trong khi dùng tập hồ sơ để thực hành kỹ năng viết? Nếu có thì những khó khăn đó là gì?

APPENDIX J

A SAMPLE OF CODING

Supportive factors	Learners
External factors (learning environment)	It is a quite strange and helpful course. There is the interaction between the teacher and students and among students. [Translated – SQ3]
	The teacher does not put much pressure on students in terms of grades. Therefore, my main goal is to get as much knowledge as possible. [Translated – SQ9]
	Fun presentations make learning atmosphere more comfortable. [Translated – SQ30]
	Learning environment in this writing class is relaxing, which I have never experienced in the previous writing classes. [Translated – SI2]
	I feel free to express ideas with the teacher and friends. [Translated – SP1]
	I am not under pressure of assignments. [Translated – SP7]
	Creative ideas and exciting activities are the best things I like in this course. [Translated – SP25]

APPENDIX K

SELF-ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Name: …………………………………Date: ………………………………………
Title of piece:…………………………………………………………………………..
Type of essay:………………………………………………………………………….

Editing

Put a check (✔) as appropriate. Write answers in complete sentences in the lines provided.

1.☐ Does the essay have at least three paragraphs?

2.☐ Does the introduction include a hook to get the reader's attention along with background information?

3.☐ Is the writer's opinion about the issue clearly stated in the thesis statement?

4.☐ Does the body language contain facts and reasons that support the opinion?

5.☐ Put a check in the margin next to the points that you understand and agree with. Explain why you agree.

_____

_____

6. ☐ Put a cross in the margin next to the points that you do not understand or disagree with. Explain why you disagree.

_____

_____

Making the marking scheme

1. Now say how many marks are needed to achieve the following:

___marks = excellent   ___ marks = good   ___marks = average

___marks = fair   ___marks = poor

2. How many marks can you get? _____

Self-assessment

1. How well did you do?

_____

_____

2. Are you happy with your score? If not, why not?

_____

_____

(adapted from Gardner & Miller, 1999; Savage & Mayer, 2005)

APPENDIX L

PEER ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Name: …………………………………………Date: …………………………………

Title of piece:……………………………………………………………………………..

Type of essay:……………………………………………………………………………….

Editing

Put a check (✔) as appropriate. Write answers in complete sentences in the lines provided.

1.☐ Does the essay have three paragraphs?

2.☐ Does the introduction include a hook to get the reader's attention along with background information?

3.☐ Is the writer's opinion about the issue clearly stated in the thesis statement?

4.☐ Does the body language contain facts and reasons that support the opinion?

5.☐ Put a check in the margin next to the points that you understand and agree with. Explain why you agree.

_____

_____

6.☐ Put a cross in the margin next to the points that you do not understand or disagree with. Explain why you disagree.

_____

_____

Making the marking scheme

1. Now say how many marks are needed to achieve the following:

___marks = excellent   ___marks = good   ___marks = average

___marks = fair   ___marks = poor

2. How many marks do you give? _____

Peer assessment

1.What did you like about the paper?

_____

_____

_____

2.What facts or ideas could be added to the paper?

_____

_____

_____

3.What changes could be made to improve the paper?

_____

_____

(adapted from Gardner & Miller, 1999; Savage & Mayer, 2005)

APPENDIX M

PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

		Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 6
Required contents						
1. Writing samples	• *a first draft*					
	• *a revised draft*					
	• *a final draft*					
2. Self-assessment & reflection	• *likes and dislikes*					
	• *writing logs*					
3. Artifacts	• *visual materials*					
	• *audio materials*					
	• *paper-based materials*					
Optional contents						
1. Writing assessment rubric						
2. Writing strategies						
3. Course description						
4. List of reference						
5.						
6.						

Learner's evaluation	__/100	__/100	__/100	__/100	__/100
Teacher's evaluation	__/100	__/100	__/100	__/100	__/100

(Note: Put a check (✓) in the item which you have for each unit and then self-grade

your portfolio with the following evaluation criteria.)

Evaluation criteria:

1. Content	*sufficient*	20%
	well-informed	20%
2. Form	*creative*	20%
	well-organized	20%
3. Supplements	*useful*	20%

APPENDIX N

STUDENT PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Research Title: *A Portfolio-Based Learner Autonomy Development Model in an EFL*

Writing Course

Researcher: Tham My Duong

Supervisor: Sirinthorn Seepho, Ph.D.

Level of Education: Doctor of Philosophy

I, ……..........................…………….…………., have read and understood the information provided by the researcher concerning this study, and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

a. I agree to answer the questionnaires.

b. I agree to interviews being audio-recorded.

c. I agree that the research data collected for the study may be published or provided to other researchers on the condition that my name is confidential.

d. I agree to participate in the study, realizing that I may physically withdraw from the study at any time during the data collection period and may request that no data arising from my participation are used, up to four weeks following the completion of my participation in the research.

e. A copy of the information sheet for this research and this form has been provided to me to keep.

Name of participant: ....

Email: ....

Signature: ....

Date: ....

Name of researcher: ....

Signature: ....

Date: ....

Names of supervisor:..

Signature: ....

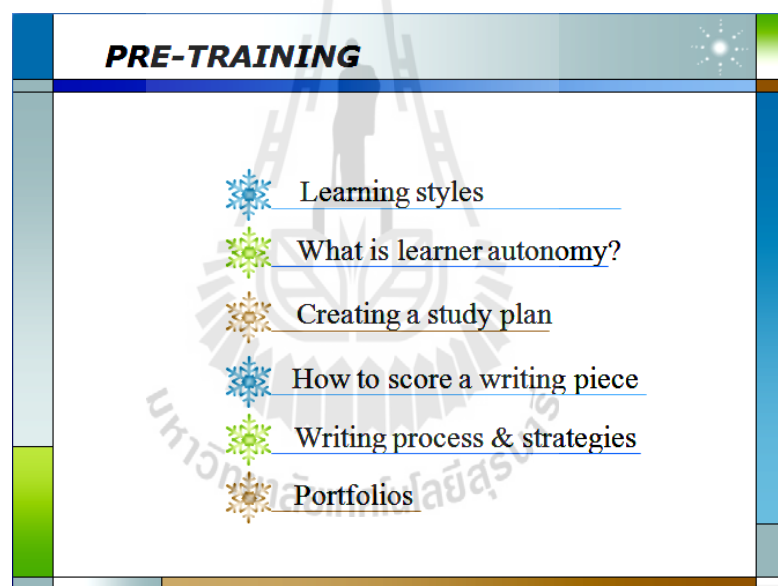Date: ....
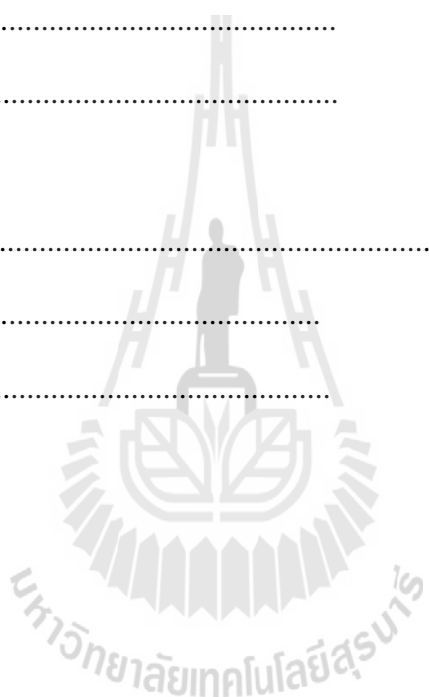
EXAMPLES OF A PORTFOLIO-BASED LEARNER AUTONOMY DEVELOPMENT LESSON

1. Pre-training

- The following contents are introduced to students.

2. Portfolio tasks

- Portfolio tasks include reflection and self-assessment (e.g., writing logs), various pieces of writing (e.g., writing sample), artifacts, and documents (optional).

PORTFOLIO TASKS
1. Writing logs
2. Writing samples
3. Artifacts
4. Documents (optional)

3. Input

- Students get knowledge about types of essays and writing process through presentations.

- The following example is a part of the presentation of 'cause and effect essays'.

4. Setting goals

- Students set weekly learning goals. In the following example, students focus on developing vocabulary and grammar.

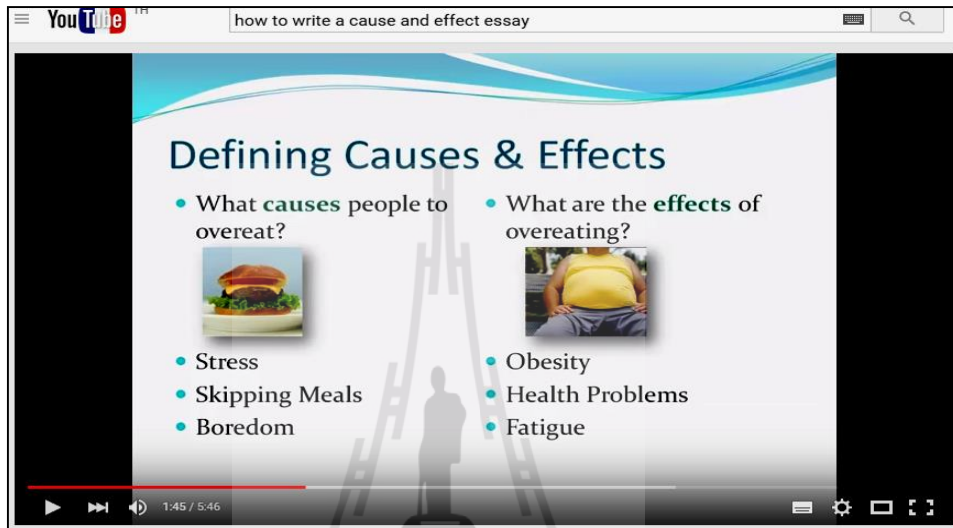| Wk	Weekly goals	Date	How much time will I spend?	How can I achieve my goal? (*Strategies*)	*Reflection*: How did I do? What did I learn? What was great? what can I do better next week?
1	Get 70 new words in IELTS	7/3-13/3	30mins/day	Learn by heart	Result: Get 20 new words Reason: Lazy, procrastinating Solution: spend more time to learn vocabulary and try to be more focused Punishment: not go out this Saturday
	Grammar: Subject-verb agreement	9/3-15/3	30mins/day	Do grammar exercises in the book	Result: Use grammatical points perfectly Feeling: more confident Reward: read a novel on Friday night

5. Creating a study plan

- Students create a study plan including specific date and time and strategies to achieve goals.

Wk	Weekly goals	Date	How much time will I spend?	How can I achieve my goal? (*Strategies*)	*Reflection*: How did I do? What did I learn? What was great? what can I do better next week?
1	Get 70 new words in IELTS	7/3-13/3	30mins/day	Learn by heart	Result: Get 20 new words Reason: Lazy, procrastinating Solution: spend more time to learn vocabulary and try to be more focused Punishment: not go out this Saturday
	Grammar: Subject-verb agreement	9/3-15/3	30mins/day	Do grammar exercises in the book	Result: Use grammatical points perfectly Feeling: more confident Reward: read a novel on Friday night

6. Selecting resources

- In order to develop ideas, vocabulary, grammar, organization, and mechanics, students choose learning resources which they are interested in. The examples of screen plots are from YouTube and VOA news.

7. Employing writing process

- Students follow the writing process given by Curry and Hewings (2003). The writing process is complete, yet the steps are not fixed. Hence, students can choose steps which are necessary for their writing.
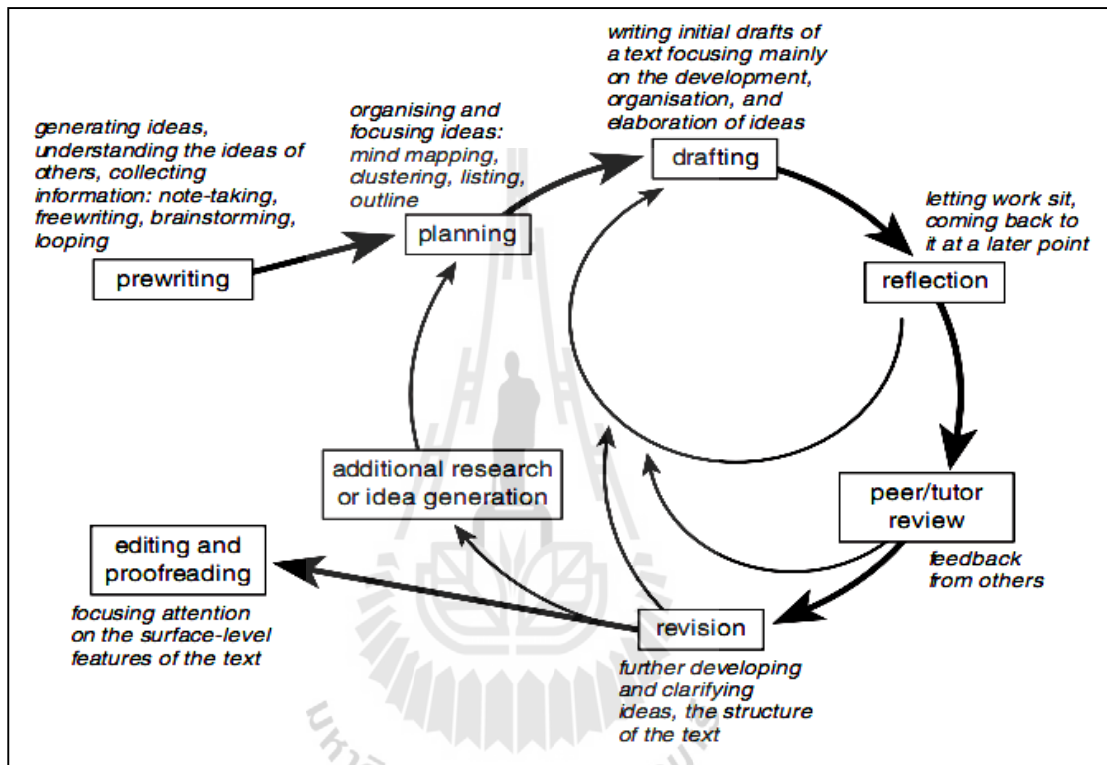
8. Self-assessing writing performance

- Students self-assess their writing using the self-assessment checklist and the scoring file by Weigle (2002).

SELF-ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Name: ....Date: ....
Title of piece:..
Type of essay:...

Editing

Put a check (✓) as appropriate. Write answers in complete sentences in the lines provided.

1.☐ Does the essay have three paragraphs?
2.☐ Does the introduction include a hook to get the reader's attention along with background information?
3.☐ Is the writer's opinion about the issue clearly stated in the thesis statement?
4.☐ Does the body language contain facts and reasons that support the opinion?
5.☐ Put a check in the margin next to the points that you understand and agree with. Explain why you agree.

_____
_____

6.☐ Put a cross in the margin next to the points that you do not understand or disagree with. Explain why you disagree.

_____
_____

Making the marking scheme

1. Now say how many marks are needed to achieve the following:
___marks = excellent   ___marks = good   ___marks = average
___marks = fair   ___marks = poor
2. How many marks can you get? _____

Self-assessment

1. How well did you do?

_____
_____

2. Are you happy with your score? If not, why not?

_____
_____

ESL composition profile			
Student	Date	Topic	
Score	Level	Criteria	Comments

Content

30-27	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: knowledgeable – substantive – thorough – development of thesis – relevant to assigned topic
26-22	GOOD TO AVERAGE: some knowledge of subject – adequate range – limited development of thesis – mostly relevant to topic, but lacks detail
21-17	FAIR TO POOR: limited knowledge of subject – little substance – inadequate development of topic
16-13	VERY POOR: does not show knowledge of subject – non-substantive – not pertinent – OR not enough to evaluate

Organization

20-18	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: fluent expression – ideas clearly stated/supported – succinct – well-organized – logical sequencing – cohesive
17-14	GOOD TO AVERAGE: somewhat choppy – loosely organized but main ideas stand out – limited support – logical but incomplete sequencing
13-10	FAIR TO POOR: non-fluent – ideas confused or disconnected – lacks logical sequencing and development
9-7	VERY POOR: does not communicate – no organization – OR not enough to evaluate

Vocabulary

20-18	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: sophisticated range – effective word/idiom choice and usage – word form mastery – appropriate register
17-14	GOOD TO AVERAGE: adequate range – occasional errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage *but meaning not obscured*
13-10	FAIR TO POOR: limited range – frequent errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage – *meaning confused or obscured*
9-7	VERY POOR: essentially translation – little knowledge of English vocabulary, idioms, word form – OR not enough to evaluate

Language Use

25-22	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: effective complex constructions – few errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions
21-18	GOOD TO AVERAGE: effective but simple constructions – minor problems in complex constructions – several errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions *but meaning seldom obscured*
17-11	FAIR TO POOR: major problems in simple/complex constructions – frequent errors of negation, agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions and/or fragments, run-ons, deletion – *meaning confused or*

9. Self-monitoring process

- Students compare achievements and learning goals and reflect on their learning process based on the suggested questions in the writing log.

Wk	Weekly goals	Date	How much time will I spend?	How can I achieve my goal? (*Strategies*)	*Reflection*: How did I do? What did I learn? What was great? what can I do better next week?
1	Get 70 new words in IELTS	7/3-13/3	30mins/day	Learn by heart	Result: Get 20 new words Reason: Lazy, procrastinating Solution: spend more time to learn vocabulary and try to be more focused Punishment: not go out this Saturday
	Grammar: Subject-verb agreement	9/3-15/3	30mins/day	Do grammar exercises in the book	Result: Use grammatical points perfectly Feeling: more confident Reward: read a novel on Friday night

10. External feedback from peers and/or the teacher

- Students assess peers' writing individually or in group using the peer assessment checklist and the scoring file by Weigle (2002).

PEER ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Name: ....Date: ....

Title of piece:...

Type of essay:...

Editing

Put a check (✓) as appropriate. Write answers in complete sentences in the lines provided.

1.☐ Does the essay have three paragraphs?
2.☐ Does the introduction include a hook to get the reader's attention along with background information?
3.☐ Is the writer's opinion about the issue clearly stated in the thesis statement?
4.☐ Does the body language contain facts and reasons that support the opinion?
5.☐ Put a check in the margin next to the points that you understand and agree with. Explain why you agree.

_____

6.☐ Put a cross in the margin next to the points that you do not understand or disagree with. Explain why you disagree.

_____
_____

Making the marking scheme

1. Now say how many marks are needed to achieve the following:
___marks = excellent ___ marks = good ___marks = average
___ marks = fair ___marks = poor
2. How many marks do you give? _____

Peer assessment

1. What did you like about the paper?

_____
_____

ESL composition profile			
Student		Date Topic	
Score	**Level**	**Criteria**	**Comments**
Content	30- 27	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: knowledgeable – substantive – thorough – development of thesis – relevant to assigned topic	
	26- 22	GOOD TO AVERAGE: some knowledge of subject – adequate range – limited development of thesis – mostly relevant to topic, but lacks detail	
	21- 17	FAIR TO POOR: limited knowledge of subject – little substance – inadequate development of topic	
	16- 13	VERY POOR: does not show knowledge of subject – non-substantive – not pertinent – OR not enough to evaluate	
Organization	20- 18	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: fluent expression – ideas clearly stated/supported – succinct – well-organized – logical sequencing – cohesive	
	17- 14	GOOD TO AVERAGE: somewhat choppy – loosely organized but main ideas stand out – limited support – logical but incomplete sequencing	
	13- 10	FAIR TO POOR: non-fluent – ideas confused or disconnected – lacks logical sequencing and development	
	9-7	VERY POOR: does not communicate – no organization – OR not enough to evaluate	
Vocabulary	20- 18	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: sophisticated range – effective word/idiom choice and usage – word form mastery – appropriate register	
	17- 14	GOOD TO AVERAGE: adequate range – occasional errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage *but meaning not obscured*	
	13- 10	FAIR TO POOR: limited range – frequent errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage – *meaning confused or obscured*	
	9-7	VERY POOR: essentially translation – little knowledge of English vocabulary, idioms, word form – OR not enough to evaluate	
Language Use	25- 22	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: effective complex constructions – few errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions	
	21- 18	GOOD TO AVERAGE: effective but simple constructions – minor problems in complex constructions – several errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions *but meaning seldom obscured*	
	17- 11	FAIR TO POOR: major problems in simple/complex constructions – frequent errors of negation, agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions and/or fragments, run-ons, deletion – *meaning confused or*	

11. Output

- Students use the writing log and end-of-course questionnaire to measure learner autonomy development.

ESSAY WRITING LOG

Name:

Student code:

Wk	Weekly goals	Date	How much time will I spend?	How can I achieve my goal? (Strategies)	Reflection: How did I do? What did I learn? What was great? what can I do better next week?
1	Get 70 new words in IELTS	7/3-13/3	30mins/day	Learn by heart	Result: Get 20 new words Reason: Lazy, procrastinating Solution: spend more time to learn vocabulary and try to be more focused Punishment: not go out this Saturday
	Grammar: Subject-verb agreement	9/3-15/3	30mins/day	Do grammar exercises in the book	Result: Use grammatical points perfectly Feeling: more confident Reward: read a novel on Friday night

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LEARNERS

Dear participant,

This questionnaire is a part of a study entitled *"A Portfolio-based Learner Autonomy Development Model in an EFL Writing Course"*. This questionnaire aims to explore EFL learners' perceptions of the development of their autonomy through the use of portfolios in an EFL writing course and writing strategies employed in their writing. We would highly appreciate it if you could give your responses for the following questions. Your answers will contribute to the success of the research. The data collected are used in the research paper only, not for any other purposes. Thank you so much for your cooperation.

I. Personal Information

Please provide your own information by putting a cross (x) in the box.

1. Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

2. How much have you known about "learner autonomy" before this writing course?

☐ not at all ☐ a little ☐ average ☐ a lot ☐ very much

If you choose the last four items, please answer the following questions:

2a. How did you gain the knowledge about learner autonomy ?

....

2b. How long did it take you to do so? ....

3. How have you learned English writing before? (your roles and your teacher's roles)

....

II. Self-assessment of autonomous learning

Please rate these statements by writing down the level at which you have gained and then

- Students put the drafts in the portfolios to measure writing competence improvement.

- Students use the portfolio assessment checklist to measure their development of employing a portfolio.

PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST						
		Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 6
Required contents						
1. Writing samples	• *a first draft*					
	• *a revised draft*					
	• *a final draft*					
2. Self-assessment & reflection	• *likes and dislikes*					
	• *writing logs*					
3. Artifacts	• *visual materials*					
	• *audio materials*					
	• *paper-based materials*					
Optional contents						
1. Writing assessment rubric						
2. Writing strategies						
3. Course description						
4. List of reference						
5.						
6.						
Learner's evaluation		/100	/100	/100	/100	/100
Teacher's evaluation		/100	/100	/100	/100	/100

12. Summative evaluation

- The teacher collects students' portfolios to evaluate the development of learner autonomy, writing competence, and the skills of employing a portfolio.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Tham My Duong was born in Phu Yen province, Vietnam. She earned a Bachelor's degree in English from Nong Lam University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam in 2005 and a Master's degree in TESOL from the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam in 2011. She received the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English Language Studies in the academic year 2015 from Suranaree University of Technology, Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand.

She has been working as a lecturer of English at Nong Lam University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam since 2005. Her academic areas of interest are learner autonomy, TESOL methodology, task-based learning, and L2 writing.