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Enhancing EFL Students' Autonomous Learning of English Conversation During COVID-19 Via Language-in-talk Log Assignments

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Abstract

This one-group pre- and post-test quasi-experimental study endeavored to investigate whether learner autonomy was developed with implementing language-in-talk log assignments as a monitored self-study task in a university English conversation course (890-020 English Conversation). Eighty-eight Thai second-year undergraduate accounting majors at Prince of Songkla University (PSU), Hat Yai, Thailand took part in the study. The participants completed 10 language-in-talk log assignments over 10 weeks. A pre- and post-questionnaire was administered before and after the intervention to examine the effect of the log assignments in developing participants' learner autonomy. The reflective log was also used to gather participants' perceptions of using the log assignments in a conversation course. The results showed that the language-in-talk log assignments aided in enhancing the students' learner autonomy to set learning goals, select appropriate learning materials, take responsibility, and evaluate their learning. Seeking social assistance, however, did not have a significant difference in mean scores, and participants expressed dissatisfaction over not being able to interact with their peers as in classroom learning. The findings further highlighted the significance of teachers' presence in scaffolding learners to achieve full autonomy. Overall, the results from this research supported the use of the log assignment as a potential pedagogical tool to enable learners to be responsible for their own learning in a language course.

Keywords: Asian EFL Learners, Autonomous Learning, COVID-19, English Language Teaching, Learning Logs, Online Learning

1. Introduction

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the normal functioning of schools and universities across the world has been disrupted. According to the United Nations (2020, p.2) statistics, "nearly 1.6 billion learners in over 190 countries and all continents have been adversely affected by the pandemic". To ensure the continuity of learning, many educational institutes have turned to online teaching, requiring teachers to move to online delivery of lessons in a brief span of time. This has resulted in a dramatic shift of learning from face-to-face to the distinctive rise of e-

learning, whereby teaching is undertaken remotely on online or digital platforms. According to Anderson (2011), learning and teaching in an online environment are quite similar to teaching and learning in any other formal institutional setting where learners' needs are analyzed, content and learning activities organized and learning assessed. However, while the shift to online teaching has averted the congregation of students to decrease the risk of COVID-19 spreading and enabled flexibility of teaching and learning, the rapid transition to online instruction has confronted teachers and students in most contexts, including Thailand with unprecedented challenges.

Aside from specialized delivery technologies, learning design is vital for successful online teaching. Hodges et al. stated that "effective online learning results from careful instructional design and planning, using a systematic model for design and development" (2020, p.3). Before the pandemic, many educational institutions in developed countries were already offering distance education and online courses with a good success rate (Anderson, 2011). Such educational institutions have invested enormous time and effort to plan and develop their instructional design with quality learning materials, appropriate media, and technology for course delivery to serve the aim of online teaching and learning. However, developing countries like Thailand did not have the luxury to go through such a rigorous process of designing and developing the online course as emergency remote teaching (Hodges et al. 2020). It was introduced within a short time span because of COVID-19. The overnight transition from the classroom to online teaching has therefore led to a hybrid of traditional and online teaching where teachers use the same pre-defined materials to teach via different technological mediums instead of face-to-face delivery (Rapanta, et al., 2020). Clark (1983, as cited in Anderson, 2011) argued that technologies served mainly as a medium of instruction but it was the instructional design built into the learning materials that had a significant influence on student achievement. For effective online teaching, learning materials must be designed properly to engage the learner and promote self-directed learning, notwithstanding the advantage of the flexibility of delivering the lesson online.

However, in the wake of the COVID-19 situation, teachers had to prepare and deliver lessons from home and make the transition from traditional classroom teaching to online teaching instantaneously without proper technical training. One major challenge for university teachers has been their lack of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) (Shulman 1987, as cited in Rapanta, et al., 2020) needed for teaching online. Consequently, teachers have faced difficulty in designing online learning materials properly with learners and learning objectives in focus, and an instructional design that provides adequate support to the learners. Therefore, designing lessons with the balanced amalgamation of high authenticity, high interactivity and high collaboration (Ring & Mathieux, 2002, as cited in Anderson 2011) for meaningful online learning experience has proven a challenge for most teachers.

In addition to appropriate learning design, learner autonomy is an important attribute for successful distance learning or online teaching. Idealistically, learners are assumed to have developed a degree of autonomy for self-learning and self-motivation for online learning. Realistically, many learners may not have developed adequate autonomy for self-regulated learning. For instance, Asian learners are often described as passive and reluctant to openly challenge teachers' authority (Pierson, 1996, as cited in Chang & Geary, 2015). Lo (2010) found that Asian EFL students were less aware of the concept of autonomous learning and hardly participated and contributed to the process of creating knowledge. Similarly, within the English as a foreign language (EFL) context of Thailand, Rukthong (2008) and Meesong and Jaroongkhongdach (2016) found that although Thai EFL learners were positive about autonomous learning, they were not ready for autonomous learning. Their excessive reliance on teachers' instruction, low level of English proficiency, and inadequate learning strategies to take control of their learning were some of the factors impeding their engagement in autonomous learning. Therefore, during such uncertain times where face-to-face interaction seems unlikely in the near future, teachers are challenged to channelize a mechanism to provide adequate scaffolding and formative guidance to students with different degrees of autonomy for effective online learning. Learners, on the other hand, are finding it difficult to navigate through the content of the lesson and stay motivated to "apply, assess, analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and reflect on what they learn" (Anderson, 2011, p.33).

Along with learning design and learner autonomy, assessment has been a major challenge in online teaching. Anderson (2011) affirmed that "effective teaching presence demands explicit and detailed discussion of the criteria by which student learning will be assessed" (p.352). Research on assessment has shown that providing feedback

to students on their performance is effective in motivating learning, shaping behavior, and developing mental constructs (Shepard, 2000, as cited in Anderson, 2011). Thus, assessment plays a critical part in facilitating online teaching and encouraging autonomous learning among students. Unlike classroom teaching where teachers interact with students on a daily basis, online teaching is isolated. Accordingly, formative assessment such as self-reflections, learning logs, and portfolios are recommended. Furthermore, asynchronous activities or tasks as part of the students' learning process is also suggested as an alternative assessment tool to create teaching presence (Rapanta, et al., 2020).

Given this shift into the virtual classroom and intensified reliance on autonomous learning of course content with online materials, the current research examines how the use of learning and assessing tools such as language-in-talk log assignments can aid Thai EFL learners' autonomous learning of English conversation during COVID-19. According to Moon (2010), the log assignment is a pedagogical tool primarily used to enhance L2 learning beyond the classroom as it can accentuate favorable conditions for language learning, encourages independent learning, and supports metacognition. Therefore, the main question to be addressed in this paper is to what extent log assignments help Thai EFL learners with their self-study or autonomous learning of English conversation during COVID-19.

2. Literature review

In this section, pertinent literature on use of log assignments as autonomous learning and assessment tools and the role of technology in autonomous language learning are reviewed to lay down a conceptual framework for the study.

2.1. Log assignment as an autonomous learning and assessment tool

For the purpose of this paper, a log assignment, also referred to as a learning log, is a pedagogical tool which provides learners a place to keep a record of their learning process along with their reflection on learning activities, instructional methods, and learning experiences. Students and teachers predominantly use a learning log as a learning and assessment tool. The log allows students to express, examine, and explore their learning experiences and provides teachers the ability to assess the progress of the students and give them feedback (Rickards, 2002). Furthermore, Lee (1997) asserted that a log has a dual purpose for students. Firstly, it acts as a personal record of learners' preparation and effort to learn, their reflection on their interpretation, and their extension and reformulation of knowledge. Secondly, it served as the source and place of their self-evaluation as they used the log to evaluate their own strategies and effort to learn. Thus, a learning log has been beneficial in creating an environment where learners can freely record, evaluate, and examine their work and learning.

Furthermore, an asynchronous task such as a log assignment has been recommended by researchers as an assessment tool to motivate and regulate students' online learning. Assessment from the instructor's perspective involves "getting to know our students and the quality of their learning" (Ramsden 2003, p.180, as cited in Garrison, 2011). However, because of COVID-19 instructors are continuously engaged in synchronous online teaching and are deprived of face-to-face oral or written examination. Therefore, monitoring students' progress on a daily basis might be challenging considering the workload imposed by the emergency shift to online teaching. The role of an instructor is not only to deliver lessons but involves providing constructive and meaningful assessment feedback to help students develop the metacognitive skills and strategies to take responsibility for their own learning (Garrison, 2011). Log assignments are a formative assessment which enables instructors to make self-regulation part of the assessment. By contrast, the summative assessment such as standardized tests with minimal feedback leads to memorization and a surface approach to learning. The log assignment encourages students to have dialogue, receive richer forms of feedback, and deeper modes of learning (Entwistle, 2000, as cited in Garrison, 2011). A log assignment facilitates the development of self-assessment and reflection in learning.

In addition to facilitating and assessing language learning, in the EFL context, a log assignment is essentially used as a medium to promote autonomous learning. According to Litzler (2014), in writing logs, learners write information and reflections on various aspects of their learning, such as their reactions to a lesson and the

methodology used, out-of-class activities carried out to learn English, and other aspects of the learning experience related to a specific language course. Lee and Cha (2017) found that the use of listening logs for extensive listening in a self-regulated environment not only developed learner autonomy among participants, but yielded learners' growth in their ability to summarize, express feelings, and improve English proficiency. A log assignment is a potential tool to develop learner autonomy as students take responsibility for their learning, evaluate their progress, and reflect on the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process beyond the classroom learning environment (Chang & Geary, 2015; Litzler & Bakieva, 2017).

Previous studies revealed that learners' participation in out-of-class activities through a log assignment demonstrated their willingness to become autonomous learners as well as enhancing autonomous learning. Chang and Geary (2015) investigated the effectiveness of using self-assessment learning logs to promote the autonomy of L2 learners in Taiwan. The participants completed the self-assessment learning log entry on a biweekly basis, reflecting on their out-of-class activities to improve their English. The results indicated that the learning logs were effective in promoting learners' autonomy, and students viewed learning logs favorably. Similarly, Litzler and Bakieva (2017) examined students' views on using learning logs in foreign language study to develop learner autonomy. The results showed that students were generally positive about the learning logs as it helped them increase autonomy while working with English outside class, created self-awareness about learning strategies, and equipped them with new ways of learning a language. Litzler (2014) concluded that a log assignment is worth implementing in foreign language classes because students have a positive view of learning logs and it makes a significant contribution to the development of learners' autonomy.

2.2. Role of Technology in Autonomous Language Learning

In recent years, the concept of learner autonomy has become prevalent in foreign language learning due to the pedagogical shift in teaching language to communicative language teaching (CLT), which encourages students to engage and take charge of their learning actively (Hafner & Miller, 2011; Luzón & Ruiz, 2010). Although the definitions of learner autonomy differ, there has been a significant degree of consensus among researchers that autonomy involves learners taking more control over their learning (Benson, 2011). Holec (1988) defined learner autonomy as the ability to take control over one's learning and Little described it as a "capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action" (1991, p. 4). However, owing to the diverse and multiple interpretations of autonomous learning, language teachers are often left bewildered in deciding to implement the autonomous approach in the pedagogical process.

Although the term learner autonomy has various definitions and interpretations, Benson (2011) claimed that language learner autonomy differs in degree, indicating that amateur learners are capable of developing autonomy and that the intensity of autonomy ranges from lower to a higher level. Furthermore, previous studies unanimously agreed that learners might be at different stages of becoming independent or autonomous learners (Nunan, 1997). Hammond and Gao (2002) found that Chinese learners had a low level of autonomy, as they tended to listen and follow teachers' instructions. By contrast, Western learners participate and contribute to the process of creating knowledge. Thus, "autonomy is not an absolute but a relative term, and the degree of autonomy may vary from one context to another" (Farmer & Sweeney, 1994, p.138).

While the degree of autonomy may vary depending on the context, researchers claimed that new technologies are now providing opportunities for EFL learners to learn a language beyond the classroom, thereby transcending geographical limitations. Benson and Chik (2010) stated that emerging online platforms provide a conducive environment for autonomous language learning. More importantly, the use of technology in language teaching and learning fosters learner autonomy by providing learners with easy access to a range of resources, tools, and environments for out-of-class learning (Benson, 2011). Benson and Chik (2010) reported on English language learning histories of two Hong Kong users of English as Foreign language in 'globalized online' space designed for video, image, audio and text sharing, who credited their high-level proficiency to interaction with their preferred media and with other members of the virtual community. Similarly, Murray's (2008) study on Japanese informal English learners also revealed that exposure to ubiquitous English language pop-culture led to great improvements in English despite their lack of interest in English as a school subject. Cole and Vanderplank (2016)

and Sockett (2014) investigated how the growing affordance of new technology fostered learner autonomy and improved learners' English proficiency. They found that it enabled significant numbers of independent, informal learners in foreign language contexts to achieve a high level of proficiency.

While technology offers myriad opportunities for autonomous language learning, it is not without constraints. According to Holec (1998, as cited in Bailly, 2010), motivation, and accessible online resources are not adequate conditions to make autonomous learning possible or easy for students, whose learning process is driven by the social promotion of teaching and heteronomy over learning and autonomy. Researchers maintained that autonomy is essentially an idea from Western culture that values independence (Schmenk, 2005 as cited in Chik, Aoki, & Smith, 2018); collectivist Asian EFL learners may find the concept difficult to incorporate into their learning. Lo (2010) revealed that Asian EFL students were less aware of the concept of autonomous learning and they tended to view learning as an end product rather than a process. Several researchers (Doyle & Parrish 2012; Guo 2011; Inozu, Sahinkarakas, & Yumru, 2010) have examined the readiness of EFL learners for autonomous learning. Their studies disclosed that while EFL learners had a positive view of autonomous learning, they lacked basic premises of learner autonomy such as learner control, ability to make decisions, the capacity to take responsibility of one's own learning and skills to critically evaluate one's own progress (Little, 2004).

Regarding Thai EFL learners, Bruner, Shimray and Sinwongsuwat (2014) noted Thai students' dependence on their teachers, and their lack of willingness to take control of their own learning due to low English proficiency (Rukthong, 2008). Therefore, it might be difficult for Thai EFL learners to easily become fully autonomous. In the Thai EFL context, Thai students might benefit from 'reactive autonomy' as a preliminary step towards proactive autonomy. In an autonomous learning activity, proactive learners are self-initiated and have more control over learning. By comparison, reactive learners are responsive to a task and teachers help to formulate a direction of learning to which learners will react by choosing preferred strategies, materials, and goals (Littlewood, 1999). Although Thai EFL learners may not have developed adequate autonomy for self-regulated learning, the pandemic has left no alternative than to embrace online learning. Consequently, learners have no choice but to make drastic changes to their learning approach to suit the new learning environment.

Therefore, considering the teaching and learning approach mandated by COVID-19, it is imperative to develop an efficient instructional design by integrating learning tools such as log assignments to foster learner autonomy. An appropriate student-centered pedagogy should be developed by considering the advantages of specific technology for autonomous language learning and its implication for learners (Schwienhorst, 2007 as cited in Hafner & Miller, 2011). Developing autonomy involves a teacher's guidance and three main pedagogical principles: 1) learner involvement, 2) learner reflection, and 3) target language use in the development of language learning autonomy (Little, 2004). Accordingly, this research adopted the premise that a language-in-talk log assignment mandates extensive learner involvement, including the requirement for students to choose their own material, take responsibility for their choice, and reflect on their learning in the target language. This is facilitated by a teacher's guidance and weekly feedback. The goal of this study is to demonstrate whether the use of language-in-talk log assignments help students to be responsible for their own learning as part of self-study monitored by the teacher.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Participants

A total of one hundred (N=100) non-English major students taking an elective English course (890-020 English Conversation) at the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Prince of Songkla University (PSU), Hat Yai, Thailand in the second semester of the academic year 2020 participated in the study. The students represented different academic majors, including Accountancy (n=94), Chemistry-Biology (n=1), Animal Science (n=4), and Agro-Industry Technology Management (n=1). Participants were selected using a purposive sampling method and to ensure participants' homogeneity, 94 students from the Accounting major who completed pre-requisite courses (890-002 Everyday English and 890-003 Fundamental English Reading and Writing) or have O-NET scores over 50 were considered as the principal participants of the study. However, data was collected from only 88 students (n=88), due to their absence in either the pre- or the post-questionnaire.

3.2. Data Collection Procedure

3.2.1. Intervention

Language-in-talk log assignments

The language-in-talk log assignment was integrated as a monitored self-study task in the conversation class and all participants received an explicit orientation on the specifics and structure of the log assignment at the beginning of the course. Each week the participants selected and watched two to three-minute long online video clips of English speakers' natural or near-natural conversations containing language actions such as greeting and introducing, leave-taking, expressing gratitude, making requests, offers and suggestions, and giving and responding to compliments and opinions. During the task, participants were also required to fill out a worksheet (see appendix A) asking them to specify the source of their listening materials, verbatim transcribe, and write a summary of the conversation describing its main goal, setting, and the relationship between speakers. To complete the task, they also needed to reflect on what they learned from the conversation concerning how a particular action is carried out through talk, what kind of language is used to get the action done, as well as how the use of the language is shaped by the interactional context. Participants submitted 10 log assignments over the course of 10 weeks.

3.3. Instrument

3.3.1. Questionnaires

A pre- and post-questionnaire was administered before and after the intervention to examine the effect of language-in-talk log assignments in developing participants' learner autonomy. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part was designed to collect the participants' demographic information, including their gender, English language proficiency, and other related information. The second part investigated the participants' autonomous learning capacity. The questionnaire was developed based on five common characteristics of learner autonomy: setting up learning objectives, having the right to decide learning content, willingness to take responsibility, making an evaluation on what had been acquired, and seeking social assistance (i.e., teacher and peer support and assistance) (Holec, 1988; Morrison, 2011). A five-point Likert scale was used to indicate the degree of agreement of respondents and the questions were available in both English and Thai.

Table 1: Values of Cronbach's alpha reported for five dimensions to measure learner autonomy

Dimension	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	Instrument	Cronbach's Alpha (Reliability Overall)
Setting Learning Goals	.735	6		
Selecting the content	.736	6		
Willingness to take responsibility	.829	9	Measuring Learner Autonomy (34 items)	.911
Evaluating one's learning	.755	8		
Seeking social assistance	.775	5		

To ensure validity and reliability, Cronbach's coefficient α was used to calculate the internal consistency coefficients of the items included in the questionnaire through a pilot study with 49 non-English major students taking an English course at the Faculty of Liberal Arts, PSU. The questionnaire was analyzed using SPSS. Cronbach α scores greater than .70 were considered as indicative of acceptable reliability (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). For the overall reliability, the Cronbach's alpha value was .911. The internal consistency reliabilities of each dimension were .735 for setting learning goals, .736 for selecting the content, .892 for willingness to take responsibility, .755 for evaluating one's learning, and .775 for seeking social assistance. The results for the reliability coefficient suggested that there was an acceptable level of internal consistency for the five dimensions. Thus, the overall reliability of the questionnaire was very high and the *r*-value for each dimension was at an acceptable level, implying that the questionnaire was reliable to assess the learner autonomy of students.

3.3.2. Reflective Logs

At the end of ten weeks of language-in-talk log assignments, open-ended questions were used to allow students to reflect upon (1) using the log assignments as a self-study task during COVID-19, (2) the effectiveness of the log assignments in developing their learner autonomy and (3) challenges and opportunities afforded by the log assignments in the conversation course.

4. Results

4.1. Questionnaire Results

4.1.1. Learner Autonomy Development

To answer the research question concerning whether language-in-talk log assignments helped learners with their self-study or autonomous learning of English conversation during COVID-19, the data was collected from closed-ended questionnaires and reflective logs.

Participants completed a 34-item pre- and post- closed-ended questionnaire in which they rated their status of learner autonomy before and after doing language-in-talk log assignments as part of monitored self-study in the conversation class. Items were rated on a five-point Likert scale. The mean differences in their pre- and post-ratings showed that overall participants developed learner autonomy and grown in all the five dimensions (1-Setting learning goals, 2-Selecting the content, 3- Willingness to take responsibility, 4-Evaluating one's learning, and 5-Seeking social assistance) after doing language-in-talk log assignments over one semester. The overall improvement in participants' learner autonomy and the extent of the growth in each dimension is represented in the graph below.
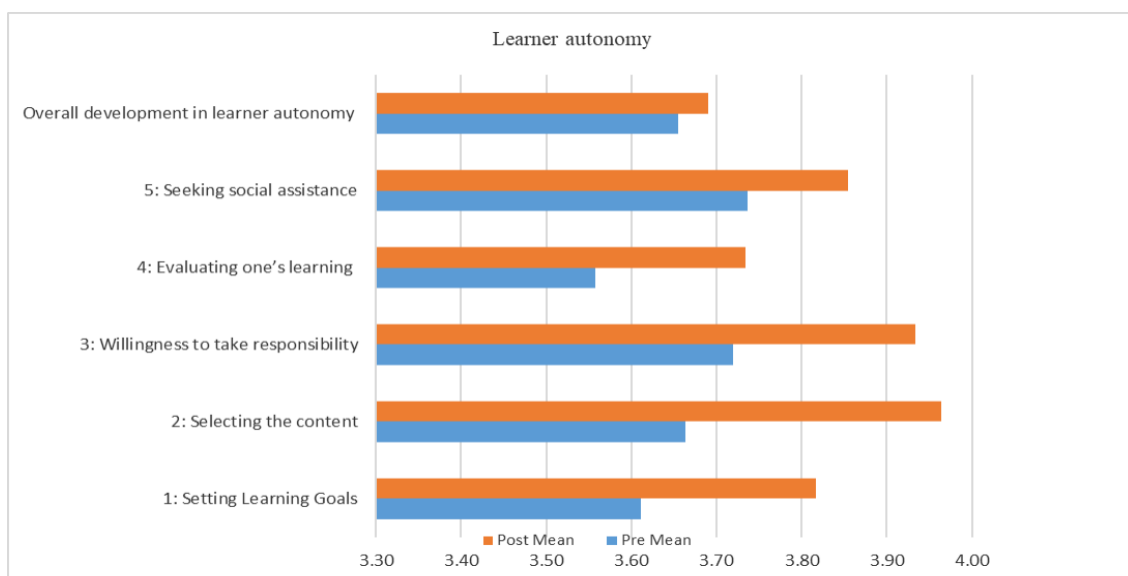

Figure 1: Learner autonomy development

Table 2: Independent paired *t*-test- students' learner autonomy

Dimension		Pre		Post		t		df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.				
I: Setting Learning Goals	pre1 - post1	3.61	.48	3.82	.48	-4.000	**	87	.00
II: Selecting the content	pre2 - post2	3.66	.55	3.96	.50	-5.354	**	87	.00
III: Willingness to take responsibility	pre3 - post3	3.72	.49	3.93	.47	-4.190	**	87	.00
IV: Evaluating one's learning	pre4 - post4	3.56	.46	3.73	.50	-2.719	**	87	.01
V: Seeking social assistance	pre5 - post5	3.74	.51	3.85	.38	-1.975		87	.05
Overall development in learner autonomy	pre - post	3.66	.38	3.69	.36	-3.957	**	87	.00

Remark : ** significant at 0.01 level , * significant at 0.05

As shown in Table 2, the independent *t*-test results suggested that overall, there were statistically significant differences in the mean scores of pre- and post-questionnaire responses of participants (*p*=0.00<0.05), indicating that the participants developed learner autonomy after the implementation of the language-in-talk log assignment as part of monitored self-study in the course. Their ratings on the five dimensions of learner autonomy also improved in respect of mean scores. Statistically, the average mean scores of setting learning goals, selecting the content, willingness to take responsibility, evaluating one's learning and seeking social assistance obtained after doing log assignments ($\bar{x}$ = 3.82, $\bar{x}$ = 3.96, $\bar{x}$ = 3.93, $\bar{x}$ =3.73, $\bar{x}$= 3.85 respectively) were, in general, considerably higher than those obtained before doing log assignments ($\bar{x}$ = 3.61, $\bar{x}$ = 3.66, $\bar{x}$ = 3.72, $\bar{x}$ =3.56, $\bar{x}$ = 3.74 respectively). It was clear that there was significant growth in the mean scores of all the five dimensions of learner autonomy after the intervention. Therefore, it can be inferred that the language-in-talk log assignments helped learners with their self-study or autonomous learning of English conversation during COVID-19.

Paired sample *t*-tests were run to determine whether the differences between the mean rating for each dimension before the intervention differed from the mean at the end of the intervention to a statistically significant degree. Specifically, *p*-values of setting learning goals, selecting the content, willingness to take responsibility were .00, and evaluating one's learning (*p*=0.01) denoting that there were significant differences in the mean scores for dimensions 1, 2, 3, and 4 either at *p*< 0.01 or. *p* < 0.05. This shows that students felt they had developed in all of these areas at a significant level after the intervention. The only exception was with the fifth dimension 'seeking social assistance' with *p*=0.05, which did not achieve statistical significance. One explanation for this outcome is that because of COVID-19 and the dramatic shift from face-to-face learning to online learning, and adhering to mandatory social distancing rules, there were fewer opportunities to seek social assistance from friends and teachers.

Table 3: Dimension 1: Setting learning goals

	Items		Pre		Post		t		df	Sig. (2-tailed)
			Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.				
1	I can adapt teacher's teaching objectives as per my own learning goals.	pre1.1 - post1.1	3.64	.76	3.89	.63	-3.279	**	87	.00
2	I know the teacher's purpose in employing log assignment in English conversation class.	pre1.2 - post1.2	3.68	.77	3.93	.66	-2.724	**	87	.01
3	I usually set my own learning goal for each semester.	pre1.3 - post1.3	4.01	.75	3.88	.80	1.384		87	.17
4	I can make my own English study plans besides doing log assignments.	pre1.4 - post1.4	3.10	.77	3.47	.79	-4.029	**	87	.00
5	I set my own learning objectives for English conversation class related to the course syllabus.	pre1.5 - post1.5	3.48	.71	3.65	.76	-1.858		87	.07
6	I analyze information that I need to successfully finish log assignment.	pre1.6 - post1.6	3.76	.66	4.09	.65	-3.944	**	87	.00
	Overall development-Dimension I	pre1 - post1	3.61	.48	3.82	.48	-4.000	**	87	.00

Remark : ** significant at 0.01 level, * significant at 0.05

The results of the *t*-test showed that overall Dimension 1 (*p*=.00) had significant differences at .01 level (see Table 3), implying that participants' ability to set up one's learning objectives and study plans improved after doing the log assignments. This was found to be true for items 1(*p*=.00), 2 (*p*=.01), 4 (*p*=.00), 6 (*p*=.00) signifying that the students felt they had improved in formulating learning goals, and planning and analyzing learning tasks and requirements to achieve the objectives of the course. The exception was with item 3 (*p*=.17) and 5 (*p*=.07), which did not achieve statistical significance. This is likely because of a ceiling effect, as students' ratings were initially high in the pre-questionnaire and did not change significantly in the post-questionnaire. A majority of the students entered the course with some knowledge of setting the learning goal for each semester. Therefore, their high pre-ratings left little room for growth in their post- ratings.

Table 4: Dimension 2: Selecting the content

	Items		Pre		Post		t		df	Sig. (2-tailed)
			Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.				
7	I would like to use videos/films/ TV shows/sitcoms to learn conversation skills, outside the English conversation class.	pre2.1 - post2.1	4.07	.77	4.31	.68	-2.842	**	87	.01
8	I like to listen to and watch audiovisuals containing ordinary everyday conversations of English speakers in doing log assignment.	pre2.2 - post2.2	3.55	.83	4.01	.78	-4.399	**	87	.00
9	I like having control over choosing materials for doing log assignments.	pre2.3 - post2.3	3.70	.92	3.86	.97	-1.241		87	.22
10	I use other English books and online resources on my own to improve my conversation skills.	pre2.4 - post2.4	3.64	.78	3.85	.72	-2.213	*	87	.03
11	I would like to select materials of my choice, rather than using materials suggested by the teacher.	pre2.5 - post2.5	3.15	.89	3.63	.93	-3.983	**	87	.00
12	I like using materials such as YouTube videos in my own time to make English language learning more interesting.	pre2.6 - post2.6	3.88	.81	4.13	.69	-2.643	**	87	.01
	Overall development-Dimension II	pre2 - post2	3.66	.55	3.96	.50	-5.354	**	87	.00

Remark : ** significant at 0.01 level , * significant at 0.05

The *p*-value for Dimension 2 of the Learner Autonomy Questionnaire was .00, which showed that there was a significant difference between mean scores of pre- and post-questionnaires at 0.01 level. As shown in Table 4, except for item 9 with *p*-value 0.22, items 7, 8, 10, 11, and 12 have significant differences either at 0.01 or 0.05 level. The average mean scores of all the six items in post-questionnaire ($\bar{x}$ = 4.31, $\bar{x}$ = 4.01, $\bar{x}$ = 3.86, $\bar{x}$ =3.85, $\bar{x}$= 3.63, $\bar{x}$= 4.13 respectively) were higher than those obtained in pre-questionnaire ($\bar{x}$ = 4.07, $\bar{x}$ = 3.55, $\bar{x}$ = 3.70, $\bar{x}$ =3.64, $\bar{x}$ = 3.15, $\bar{x}$ = 3.88, respectively). Considering the mean values shown in Table 4, it can be understood that the participants' perspective of selecting the content for their own learning developed after doing the log assignments for one semester. The post-mean scores of items 7, 8, 12, related to using online resources such as YouTube videos, films, TV shows and sitcoms beyond the classroom or in their own learning time, were significantly different from the pre-mean scores. Although the post-mean scores for item 9 increased, its *p*-value at 0.22 demonstrated that participants were not entirely confident in having full control over choosing materials for doing the assignment despite their fondness for exploring online resources such as YouTube videos, films, and other resources.

Table 5: Dimension 3-Willingness to take responsibility

	Items		Pre		Post		t		df	Sig. (2-tailed)
			Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.				
13	I would like to take the responsibility of formulating the direction of learning for English conversation class as per my own needs.	pre3.1 - post3.1	3.65	.77	3.85	.72	-2.575	**	87	.01
14	I would like to share the responsibility of deciding what to do in the English conversation class with my teacher.	pre3.2 - post3.2	3.47	.76	3.70	.79	-2.742	**	87	.01
15	I would like to take the responsibility of completing log assignments in my own learning time to improve my learning productivity.	pre3.3 - post3.3	3.86	.80	4.01	.75	-1.326		87	.19
16	I believe that I will achieve a good level of speaking proficiency if I work on my own.	pre3.4 - post3.4	3.40	.90	3.56	.96	-1.438		87	.15
17	I know what to learn from the conversation material of my choice.	pre3.5 - post3.5	3.59	.80	3.86	.76	-2.711	**	87	.01
18	I know how to keep record of what I learn during the log assignment task.	pre3.6 - post3.6	3.39	.76	3.83	.78	-4.517	**	87	.00
19	In the future, I would like to continue learning English on my own/without a teacher	pre3.7 - post3.7	4.23	.87	4.42	.74	-1.969		87	.05
20	My success/failure in learning language is my own responsibility.	pre3.8 - post3.8	4.20	.78	4.28	.66	-.854		87	.40
21	I would like to take charge of assessing whether my learning is progressing according to my plan or not.	pre3.9 - post3.9	3.69	.68	3.88	.74	-1.861		87	.07
	Overall development-Dimension III	pre3 - post3	3.72	.49	3.93	.47	-4.190	**	87	.00

Remark: ** significant at 0.01 level, * significant at 0.05

Table 5 indicated that the *p*-value for Dimension 3 of the Learner Autonomy Questionnaire was .00, showing a significant difference at the 0.01 level. All the nine items achieved increased average mean scores in the post-questionnaire compared to the pre-questionnaire. The *p*-value of item 13 (.01), item 14 (.01), item 17(0.1), and item 18 (.00) showed that students were willing to take responsibility for their own learning by formulating directions of learning, sharing responsibility with the teacher, analyzing materials, and keeping a record of their learning. However, item 15 (.19), item 16 (.15), item 19 (.05), item 20 (.40), and item 21 (.07) had a higher *p*-value (*p*>.05) showing that despite obtaining high mean scores in the post-questionnaire there was not a significant difference between pre- and post-mean scores. This shows that participants' readiness to embrace complete learner autonomy was at the initial stage, as they were skeptical about their capability to learn on their own with no scaffolding and guidance from the teacher. Specifically, items 16, 19, and 21 suggested that students were not confident about their ability to learn and assess their own learning without the teacher support.

Table 6: Dimension 4- Evaluating one's learning

	Items		Pre		Post		t		df	Sig. (2-tailed)
			Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.				
22	I need my teacher to evaluate me through regular test to check my progress of doing log assignment.	pre4.1 - post4.1	3.45	.84	3.72	.88	-2.322	*	87	.02
23	Every time I have an assignment, the teacher should score or correct it.	pre4.2 - post4.2	4.23	.69	4.34	.68	-1.342		87	.18
24	I do the log assignments only when my teacher is going to grade me.	pre4.3 - post4.3	3.15	1.02	3.35	.92	-1.659		87	.10
25	I have my own ways of testing how much I have learned from log assignment.	pre4.4 - post4.4	3.26	.72	3.52	.87	-2.372	*	87	.02
26	I evaluate whether I achieved my learning goals through my engagement in log assignment.	pre4.5 - post4.5	3.42	.77	3.60	.78	-1.887		87	.06
27	I evaluate whether my process of doing log assignment was effective or not in improving conversation skills.	pre4.6 - post4.6	3.50	.71	3.69	.73	-2.152	*	87	.03
28	I examine whether the learning approaches I use in doing log assignment enhance my conversation skills.	pre4.7 - post4.7	3.66	.76	3.69	.76	-.354		87	.72
29	I check whether I have understood the previous lesson when I try to finish a log assignment.	pre4.8 - post4.8	3.77	.72	3.93	.71	-1.578		87	.12
	Overall development-Dimension IV	pre4 - post4	3.56	.46	3.73	.50	-2.719	**	87	.01

Remark: ** significant at 0.01 level, * significant at 0.05

The *p*-value of the participants' responses for Dimension 4 of the Learner Autonomy Questionnaire was .01, showing a significant difference between the mean scores of pre- and post-questionnaires at 0.05 level. Statistically, the average mean scores of the eight items in post-questionnaire ($\overline{x}$ = 3.72, $\overline{x}$ = 4.34, $\overline{x}$ = 3.35, $\overline{x}$ =3.52, $\overline{x}$= 3.60, $\overline{x}$= 3.69, $\overline{x}$= 3.69 $\overline{x}$= 3.93, respectively) increased compared to those gained in pre-questionnaire ($\overline{x}$ = 3.45, $\overline{x}$ = 4.23 $\overline{x}$ = 3.15, $\overline{x}$ =3.26, $\overline{x}$ = 3.42, $\overline{x}$ = 3.50, $\overline{x}$= 3.66, $\overline{x}$= 3.77 respectively). Item 22, which focuses on students' dependence on teachers for evaluation, had a statistically significant mean difference (p=.02). Nonetheless, it appears that the implementation of log assignments as part of the monitored self-study task in conversation class helped the participants to reflect and monitor their own learning while doing the log assignments. It is apparent from Item 25 'I have my own ways of testing how much I have learned from log assignments' and item 27 'I evaluate whether my process of doing log assignments was effective or not in improving conversation skills' that participants developed their approach to evaluating learning after doing the log assignments as both the items achieved a significant difference of .02 and .03, respectively. Furthermore, the fact that there was no significant difference between the pre- and post-mean scores of items 23 and 24 (.18 and .10, respectively) revealed that participants were gradually becoming autonomous in evaluating their work without much reliance on the teacher.

Table 7: Dimension 5: Seeking social assistance

| | Items | | Pre | | Post | | | | |
			Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	t		df	Sig. (2-tailed)
30	In log assignment, I like the parts where I can work with other students.	pre5.1 - post5.1	3.81	.92	3.72	1.08	.705		87	.48
31	I seek help from my friends outside of class to do log assignment effectively.	pre5.2 - post5.2	3.15	.97	3.43	1.09	-2.487	*	87	.01
32	I learn better when I get help from my teacher beyond the classroom.	pre5.3 - post5.3	3.76	.79	3.91	.75	-1.286		87	.20
33	I rely on my teacher's feedback to improve the quality of my log assignment.	pre5.4 - post5.4	4.10	.79	4.28	.71	-1.667		87	.10
34	I find it more useful to work with my friends than to work on my own in doing log assignment.	pre5.5 - post5.5	3.86	.97	3.76	1.01	.895		87	.37
	Overall development-Dimension V	pre5 - post5	3.74	.51	3.85	.38	-1.975		87	.05

Remark: ** significant at 0.01 level, * significant at 0.05

Table 7 showed that the *p*-value for Dimension 5 of the Learner Autonomy Questionnaire was .05, suggesting that there was no significant difference between the mean rating for each item before and after the intervention. Only item 31 had a significant difference with *p*-value .01, showing that students sought help from their peers to do assignments. However, items 30, 32, 33, 34 (*p*-value=.48, .20, 10, .37 respectively) did not have a significant difference; specifically, the mean scores of items 30 and 34 in post-questionnaire ($\overline{x}$ =3.72 and $\overline{x}$ 3.76 respectively) decreased compared to pre-questionnaire ($\overline{x}$ = 3.81, $\overline{x}$ = 3.86 respectively). The decrease in the post-mean scores of items 30 and 34 might be because of the shift of learning from face-to-face to online learning due to COVID-19. Students learning online lacked the opportunity to meet with friends for interactive discussion. This was in contrast to the classroom learning environment, which provides students with opportunities for collaborative learning such as group discussion and pair work. Although the mean scores for items 32 and 33, associated with students' dependence on instructors' assistance and feedback, are statistically insignificant (.20 and .10 respectively), both items obtained higher mean ($\overline{x}$ = 3.91, $\overline{x}$ =4.28,) in the post-questionnaire than in pre-questionnaire ($\overline{x}$ = 3.76, $\overline{x}$ = 4.10,). Participants' rating for item 33 was high both before and after the intervention, suggesting that instructors' help and feedback was still an important aspect in developing autonomous learning in students.

5. Results from Reflective Logs

At the end of the intervention, participants submitted a reflective log containing open-ended questions, which elicited their experience of doing language-in-talk log assignments as part of monitored self-study tasks in a conversation course amidst COVID-19. The reflective log was mainly used to collect additional information about the effectiveness of log assignments in developing their autonomous language learning. The results suggested two major themes involving participants' development in learner autonomy (e.g., setting goals, selecting content, willingness to take responsibility), and the importance of the teacher's presence.

5.1. Autonomous Language Learning

The 88 participants of the study agreed that the language-in-talk log assignments enhanced their autonomous learning of English conversation during COVID-19 and unanimously responded 'Yes' to Question 3 'Did the log assignment help you with your self-study or autonomous learning of English conversation during COVID-19? If yes, how? If no, why? (see appendix B). These responses on the use of log assignments in relation to the development of autonomous learning corroborated the findings of the closed-ended questionnaire which also indicated that overall, the participants developed learner autonomy after implementing the language-in-talk log assignments as part of monitored self-study in a conversation course. The following are the comments provided by students in their reflection: The students' comments were not edited by the researcher for errors in grammar.

- *Yes, I think log assignment helped me with my self-study. Because when I did log assignment, I had to search for data by myself and I can do it anywhere such as house or dormitory. This is the great idea for learning English during COVID-19 with social distance policy and take advantage of my free time.*

- *Yes, I think log assignments can help me to learn on my own because when doing log assignments, I have to research and analyze resources to do the issues by own. I can do assignments right from home. Which is suitable for learning during COVID-19. It's a good solution.*

When asked whether the log assignment motivated them to look for more resources for improving their English conversation skills, all the participants reported that it stimulated them to search for more resources to facilitate their learning experience. The following excerpts demonstrated how log assignments prompted participants to look for more information:

- *In this semester, I associated with English language better than ever, therefore I was interested in looking for more resources apart from YouTube. I have one new resource for improving my English conversation skills, which is a channel podcast in Spotify. I listen to podcast in my free time and repeated after podcaster has spoken.*

- *Log assignment can motivate me to look for more resources for improving my English conversation skills. Because when I heard the conversation from the VDO clips it made me feel like I want to speak English better. I try to figure out the meaning of words that I don't know or understand and I try to listen to VDO clips or watch movies in English.*

Apart from being a stimulus to search for more resources, the log assignment also developed participants' capacity to select their own content and material for learning. Participants were optimistic about their experience of selecting materials for doing the log assignment, and expressed their interest in choosing materials of their choice and exploring the resources at their own pace. The following statements reflect the students' perception of greater learner autonomy:

- *It makes me enjoy studying. I can choose the video that I am interested to study, so it made me concentrate on log assignments and I was able to focus fully on assignments.*

- *I enjoy doing log assignments as a part of the self-study task. I can choose the movies that I like for easier transcribing and I already know how a particular action is carried out through talk.*

Furthermore, one of the essential components of autonomous learning is self-assessment and evaluating one's learning process, which enables learners to undertake more responsibility in identifying their weaknesses and strength. As can be inferred from participants' reflections, log assignments seemed to have developed participants' ability to assess their own learning. Participants expressed the following statements in their reflection:

- *Log assignment made me realize what parts of my skills are lacking and where I need to improve.*

- *When I first got this assignment, I wondered if this was the assignment of communicating English. Why isn't there more speaking practice? Which from this work is quite a lot of writing for me? At first, I wondered what the advantages were but after working on this assignment, I started to enjoy it even more. It is a task that I have developed skills in grammar, vocabulary, critical thinking, discussion.*

However, the findings of the reflective log suggested that log assignments did not aid in promoting social engagement and collaboration. This echoed the questionnaire results, which also revealed that of the five dimensions of learner autonomy, only the fifth dimension 'seeking social assistance' did not achieve statistical significance. Seeking social assistance is an important scaffolding activity to promote learner autonomy. However, due to COVID-19 and the shift from face-to-face to online learning with social distancing, there were few opportunities for interactive tasks and collaborative discussion. The following statements reflect participants' desire for peer work or face-to-face interaction with their friends and teachers:

- *I think my studies and assignments during COVID 19 can improve conversational skills at a level less than teaching in a normal classroom. Because teaching and learning in the classroom, there is more discussion and exchange between teachers and students than online learning. But doing a record assignment each week helped me practice my listening skills and to see examples of the conversations I encountered often in everyday life from the clips I studied. But in terms of improving conversational skills, I think I haven't been able to get enough of my speaking skills. Because during COVID-19 I was unable to go out and meet people and practice communicating in English.*

- *I prefer studying in the classroom. Talk to teachers and friends. When you have questions, you can ask the teacher immediately. But this online study has put me in charge of researching the various topics of the assignment. I think I have practiced a little conversation skill because during COVID I studied online and rarely got to meet people.*

5.2. Teacher Presence

Participants' reflective logs unveiled that teacher scaffolding gave students necessary guidance in doing log assignments. They admitted that the teacher's weekly feedback on log assignments encouraged them to do better and be actively engaged in completing the task on time. This attitude aligned with questionnaire item 23 'Every time I have an assignment, the teacher should score or correct it' and item 24 'I do the log assignment only when my teacher is going to grade me'. Mean scores of both items increased after implementing log assignments in the conversation course. Participants' comments revealed that they appreciated the support received from the teacher. For example, participants wrote:

- *…… when I got the feedback and mark for the log assignment, it makes me want to do the next log assignment better. I want to get good feedback and mark. So, I will search for more resources for improving my English conversation skills.*

- *At first, I did not like to watching movie but when I finish my work and got best word from teacher, it made me want to do next log assignment. I think teacher's good advice help student to open their mind with English. Someone did not like English but they got good advice from their teacher, it made them like English.*

- *Having feedback from teachers made me not feel lonely when studying this subject. Teacher motivate me to submit work.*

- *The enjoy part of the self-study task is when I receive scores and comments for the past log assignments. I enjoy developing my skills from the comments each week to improve the work and get better scores every week.*

While participants relatively improved learner autonomy after doing log assignments, some students still preferred having explicit instruction from their teacher and wanted the teacher to provide standard material to all students:

- *I need teacher to give a video clip for each log assignment, because sometimes it's unfair with someone who don't like to watch English movie cinema or cartoon. I think teacher should provide a fixed video clip for each log assignment for everyone, in order to be fair with everyone.*

- *Assigned work, I think it is good. But I think I should be taught more in detail about the use of notation in transcription. And explain various topics for better understanding so that students can understand and can search for more direct clips.*

6. Discussion

The current study aimed to examine the effectiveness of using language-in-talk log assignments as part of monitored self-study in developing learner autonomy of Thai EFL learners during COVID-19. The results supported previous studies regarding the use of log assignments as a pedagogical tool to promote autonomous learning (Chang & Geary, 2015; Duong & Seepho; 2017, Lee & Cha 2017; Litzler & Bakieva, 2017). Overall, the findings of the closed-ended questionnaire and reflective logs disclosed that the participants developed learner autonomy after implementing language-in-talk log assignments in the conversation course. Statistically, the questionnaire results showed a significant effect of using log assignments on participants' post-mean scores. Students' ability to take charge of their own learning improved, as they became capable enough to formulate learning goals, choose what to learn, select appropriate learning methods, and evaluate their learning process and outcomes. Holec (1988) defined learner autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" (p.3). The findings from reflective logs revealed that the log assignments helped in developing students' learner autonomy. Their ability to select learning materials, make decisions, and act independently developed. Based on the results of the study, language-in-talk log assignments aided in enhancing the learner autonomy of students during this unprecedented time of the global pandemic. The findings suggest the value and potential of exploiting log assignments as a teaching and learning tool for both instructors and learners in the EFL context.

However, data analysis showed that despite the overall development of learner autonomy, there was not a significant difference between mean scores of the fifth dimension 'seeking social assistance' before and after the intervention. The decrease in post-mean scores of items 30 and 34 indicated that the log assignment did not really offer students a platform for learner interaction and collaboration. Firstly, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, educational institutions around the world have been forced to depend on emergency measures by switching to online learning from face-to-face learning and adapting to the new normal by adhering to social distancing protocols. This shift to online teaching has enabled flexibility of teaching and learning, but drastically reduced social interaction; that is the support from teachers or peers in the language learning process (Rapanta, et al., 2020). Consequently, restrictive social communication channels such as student-student and student-teacher interaction for discussion and practical activities amidst COVID-19 might have affected the possibility of seeking help from peers.

Secondly, the log assignment was designed as an individual self-study task. The structure and requirements of the assignment might not have promoted peer discussion and collaborative learning. Rovai (2002) asserted that the delivery medium is not the determining factor in the quality of learning per se; rather, the content and instructional strategy in the learning materials determine the learner's achievement (as cited in Anderson, 2011). Accordingly, further investigation is needed after incorporating an interactive task into the current structure of a log assignment

to see the impact of collaborative learning on learner autonomy. Anderson argued, "as learners work through the content, they will find the need for learner support, which could take the form of learner-to-learner, learner-to-instructor, instructor-to-learner, and learner-to-expert interactions'' (2011, p.33). Apparently, the interactive task does not solely promote social engagement and collaboration. Rather, it depends on student's ability to take initiative in seeking social assistance if they could not learn in isolation but had to collaborate and interact with others in autonomous learning (Cui, 2012 as cited in Cheng, 2019). Therefore, the design of a log assignment and a student's willingness to collaborate could have influenced their decision to seek social assistance during the learning process.

The findings of this study are in line with other research studies that claimed that the teacher's feedback and roles are important in the development of students' autonomous learning (Kim, 2014; Lee, 2016; Yunismar, 2019). According to Little (2007) to foster learner autonomy, the teacher plays a prominent role in facilitating, monitoring, and evaluating the learning process. This explains the increased post-mean scores of items 32 and 33 of the questionnaires. Furthermore, providing timely feedback is considered as "an integral part of the online teacher's function of facilitating students' learning" (Anderson, 2011, p.352). Findings from the reflective log revealed that students needed the teacher's weekly feedback, which motivated them to submit better log assignments. Although autonomous learners ought to be analyzing their learning needs, selecting appropriate approaches, evaluating their learning process, Morrison (2011) argued that scaffolding from teachers is essential as autonomous learning need not be a secluded activity, but rather a collaborative experience to achieve learners' goals. Teachers' support and assistance are quintessential in the promotion of learner autonomy among students.

7.   Limitations to the Study

All the participants were considered an experimental group in this one-group pre- and post-test quasi-experiment design. Having a control group whereby participants are taught the same conversation course as the experimental group but without having to complete weekly log assignments might have offered a wider perspective on the effectiveness of using language-in-talk log assignments as an autonomous learning tool. Secondly, the log assignment did not incite much collaboration or peer interaction between the learners. Adding a task where learners can exclusively work in pairs or groups using different communication technologies might have provided adequate scaffolding to facilitate learning.

Apart from these limitations, the findings of this study attested to the potential for using language-in-talk log assignments as a teaching and learning tool in the EFL context. Gradually, educational institutions were moving toward online delivery, both on campus and at a distance (Anderson, 2011). However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, schools and universities around the world, and in particular in developing countries like Thailand, grappled with significant challenges of urgent and unexpected transition from face-to-face learning to online learning. The concerns raised by UNICEF (2020) regarding the rapid shift of learning from the classroom to online learning were that the students might not have developed sufficient autonomy for self-learning. There was a lack of mechanisms for teachers to assess and provide feedback and formative guidance to students. To address these concerns, teachers can use language-in-talk log assignments as a pedagogical tool to facilitate autonomous learning and assess student's progress for meaningful learning.

Conclusion

This paper investigated the effectiveness of using language-in-talk log assignments in enhancing autonomous learning of Thai EFL learners during COVID-19. Findings from the statistical analysis and themes that emerged from reflective logs reaffirmed that autonomy is a universal human capacity (Little, 2007). Asian learners can enhance their learner autonomy with proper training and pedagogical tools in place. The results confirmed that log assignments developed students' ability to take charge of their own learning in terms of setting learning goals, selecting appropriate learning materials and methods, and evaluating their own learning. Since learning is the product of social interaction, the findings from the study also highlighted the importance of teacher support and collaboration with peers. Both are vital for learners to achieve full autonomy in the language learning process.

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Appendix A - Language-in-Talk Log Assignment

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Worksheet: Language-in-Talk Log Assignment # _____

Name: _____ **Student ID:** _____ **Section:** _____

Part I: What do you study? (Please include the source of your materials).

Part II: Can you provide a transcript and write a summary of the conversation you have just listened to?

Part III: What have you learned as to how each weekly-chosen action is carried out in English?

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Appendix B - Reflective Logs (open-ended questions)

1. In what ways did you **enjoy/not enjoy** doing log assignments as a part of self-study task?
2. Did log assignments motivate you to look for more resources for improving your English conversation skills? If yes, how? If no, why?
3. Did log assignments help you with your self-study or autonomous learning of English conversation during COVID-19? If yes, how? If no, why?
4. What are some **good points/benefits** of doing log assignments?
5. What were some of the problems you faced during the process of doing log assignments?