

修士学位請求論文要旨

Promoting Secondary School Language Learners' Autonomy  
through Portfolio-based Instruction

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## PROMOTING SCHOOL LEARNERS' AUTONOMY

### **Background**

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether it was possible to promote secondary school learners' autonomous attitude by encouraging the management of their self-directed learning outside of class.

Although Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) upholds "fostering a spirit of autonomy and independence" for one of the educational goals (MEXT, 2006, Article 2, (2)), 67.0% of junior high school students in Japan feel unsure about the ways to study at home (Benesse Educational Research and Development Institute, 2015). Moreover, some students are frustrated due to the gap between the necessity and stagnation of their out-of-class learning after they enter university (Hayashi, 2018; Yamashita, 2015). Encouraging self-directed learning out-of-class by school teachers would be one of the possible approaches for fostering the students' autonomy. I thus deal with the junior high school students' out-of-class learning management and investigate whether that the framework of management could promote their autonomous attitude.

### **Literature Review**

The concept for language learners' autonomy started from the education for the

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adults in social, and later the idea of autonomy prevailed in schools.

For the adult education, Holec (1981) described autonomy as “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning”. The idea of learner autonomy firstly signified learners’ independent, and later it became recognized that autonomy is not isolation and that development often entails social interaction. The idea of autonomy began to adapt in the school educations at the beginning of 1990s (Little, 1991). Little (1991) defined autonomy as a psychological capacity (Little, 1991, p.4). Also, the autonomy was described a multi-dimensional capacity, which take different forms for different learners, different times, and different situations (Benson, 1997; Benson, 2013; Little, 1991). Benson (2013) defined language learners’ autonomy as “the capacity to take control over one’s own learning” (p. 58). It represented autonomy’s multi-dimensional capacities with three aspects: learning management, cognitive processes, and learning content (p.61).

Hiromori (2019a; 2019b) developed Autonomy Diagnosis Scale (ADS), for promoting Japanese high school learners’ autonomy. The inquiries ask learners’ learning behavior that investigate three aspects of learners’ autonomy such as learning strategies, learning motivation, and learning content, which evolved from Benson (2013)’s definition which to be controlled over the three dimensions mentioned previously.

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Hikomori (2019a; 2019b)'s purposes were to develop ADS and to promote the school learners' autonomy by showing the students their own ADS scores to think about their learning. The studies showed students' awareness of their current out-of-class learning by doing the reflection in the activity, and their foresight into their future learning.

Making the learners' self-regulation loop of reflection and planning by supplying an out-of-class learning system would be of their help. Also, acquisition-based learning which aims to have learners acquire basic scholastic proficiency (MEXT 2011) would be appropriate for the learners to practice the out-of-class learning system.

Furthermore, visualizing their own learning habits would be a support. Portfolios enable students to visualize their learning process and learned content, since they make "work cycle" for autonomous learning in the class (Little, Dam, Legenhausen, 2017), by reading through the documents in portfolios that could enhance their self-reflective thoughts (Mineishi, 2010). In the current study, the participants use the portfolios which encourage the students' reflection, planning or foresight for their out-of-class learning.

### **Pilot Study**

The pilot study was implemented to identify the real conditions of the junior

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high school students' learner autonomy in the context of out-of-class learning. The participants were first- and third- year of junior high school students in a suburban area of Tokyo. The questionnaire was adapted from Hiromori (2019a; 2019b)'s Autonomy Diagnosis Scale (ADS) to investigate the aspects of learners' autonomy: Learning Strategies, Learning Motivation, and Learning Content. To examine a significant difference for each aspect between the first- and third-year participants, *t*-tests were used. The result showed there are statistically significant differences between the first- and third- year students' autonomy in all aspects. It implied the learners' autonomy does not develop in parallel with the academic capacity in the natural junior high school context. If they practice and acquire autonomous skills, they may be able to have more control over their own study and withstand the tough period in their third year. Thus, I carried out the portfolio-based-intervention for junior high school students.

### **Research Question**

1. Do portfolio-based instructions for self-study management promote junior high school learners' autonomous attitude?
2. Do portfolio-based instructions encourage them to put self-study into practice?
3. If portfolio-based instructions encourage their self-study performance, what are the

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contributing factors?

### **Methodology**

The participants were 58 first-year students in junior high school, who took the pilot study. They were divided into the treatment and control groups. For the instrument of main study, the ADS in pilot study was revised to increase the test reliability. The intervention of the main study was conducted over three weeks in February 2019. During intervention, the treatment participants used the portfolios for promoting their out-of-class learning to come into practice. The portfolios contained three types of worksheets. Reflection worksheets helped participants' retrospection of their habits related to their out-of-class learning. Foresight worksheets were used to note some strategies of what they need to do for the efficient out-of-class learning. The out-of-class learning planner (OCLP) helped participants plan and reflect on their daily out-of-class learning. Each sheet supported an aspect of autonomy in ADS and designed to cover all three aspects altogether.

For the procedure, the treatment and control participants took the ADS pre-test on the first day. On the first class lesson, The treatment participants were announced that English language learners in Japan need to study English at least for 2200 hours,

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therefore, they would need to study by themselves 270 minutes per week. After the notification the participants started to use OCLP throughout the intervention. They used reflection worksheets to remember their usual out-of-class learning conditions each time before they had class lessons. They had the class lessons for discussing and sharing the ideas for out-of-class learning improvement. After the classes, they wrote some new ideas on the foresight sheets. The treatment and control participants took the ADS post-test on the last day. After that, the treatment participants did the reflection of the three-week out-of-class learning with the portfolio sheets.

### **Results and Discussion**

For investigating the results of Research Question 1, a repeated measure analysis of variance (ANOVA) was carried out. The treatment group's mean scores of ADS post test scores significantly increased on Learning Motivation and Learning Strategies, and Learning Content showed a marginal significance. On the other hand, the control participants' ADS scores increased on Learning Strategies but did not change noticeably on the other two aspects. This could be because the school distributed the study planners which may promote the students' aspect of Learning Strategies. On the other hand, the school did not have contexts and opportunities to promote the other

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aspects of autonomy such as Learning Motivation and Learning Content.

For investigating the results of Research Question 2 and 3, I looked into the participants' study time and writings on OCLP during the intervention. In addition, a further questionnaire was implemented. I divided them into high- and low-level groups with the cluster analysis according to their ADS characters. The two-thirds of the participants were in high-level group and they mostly achieved 270 minutes every week, however, other one-third participants in the low-level group could not accomplish 270 minutes. The participants' writings and questionnaire result suggested there were external factors of participants which contribute to their out-of-class learning performance. It could be; setting 270 minutes study time for achievement goal, and the intervention activities especially the class discussions, the posters, and the teacher comments on the OCLP. It was also found that the students' internal factors could be; skills for writing, problem solving, and learning environment regulation.

### **Conclusion**

There were some limitations to the current study. Firstly, the intervention period was confined to be three weeks: it was too short to stabilize their autonomous habit they achieved through the intervention. Secondly, it aimed to increase the students'



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out-of-class learning by focusing on the length of the time, but it did not cover whether it is concentrated learning time. Thirdly, the study results were valid for the research school and the participants in this study since the research was practiced in only one school. Fourthly, the aspects of autonomy in the ADS that were employed by this study do not cover everything about learners' autonomy. Lastly, this study focused on acquisition-based learning for practicing out-of-class learning: inquiry-based learning, which promotes learners' proactive learning and thinking with learners' intellectual curiosity (MEXT, 2011) would be crucial as well to promote learners' multifaceted dimensions of autonomy.

For concluding, it is suggested that schools should instruct students on the strategies for Learning Motivation as well when they encourage the students' out-of-class learning by distributing study planners. Also, it should be mentioned the necessities of specialists in schools such as the language learning advisers on teachers' behalf, in order to use portfolios consistently for making the autonomous "work cycle" of learners.

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