A Double-Channel Model for Developing Learner Autonomy in an EFL Context

Jinghui Wang, Harbin Institute of Technology, China
Kenneth A. Spencer, Hull University, UK
Dongshuo Wang, University of Manchester, UK

ABSTRACT

Using Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) to develop learner autonomy is a challenging task in the context of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). A new, double channel model for developing learner autonomy is proposed. This provides the basis for an experimental study, which investigates the impact of an autonomous learning platform (ALP). Both self-directed learning and socially-mediated learning are incorporated into the platform. The results of the study indicate that the double channel model supports the facilitating effects of scaffolding through English communication in an EFL context.

Keywords: Autonomous Learning, Computer-Assisted-Language-Learning, Double Channel Model, Self-Directed Learning, Socially-Mediated Learning

INTRODUCTION

Recently, researchers have shown an increased interest in the theory and practice of autonomy in learning (e.g., Benson, 2005, 2007; Benson & Chik, 2011; Blin, 2004, 2005; Tschirhart & Rigler, 2009). However, autonomous learning does not happen in a vacuum. The use of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) in the development of learner autonomy is a critical issue in the context of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) (Guo & Yan, 2007; Hu, 2005; Wang, 2007), especially the use of multimedia and web technologies for the provision of individualized and collaborative learning in an EFL context (Shao & Wu, 2007; You, 2004).

The current study is situated in a university setting, and explores learner autonomy via CALL for postgraduate EFL students majoring in science and technology learning English to participate in international academic exchanges. In this paper, a range of models for promoting learner autonomy are reviewed, and a new double channel model is developed.

DOI: 10.4018/ijcallt.2012070101
REVIEW OF MODELS FOR DEVELOPING EFL LEARNER AUTONOMY

In the past two decades, language learning and teaching researchers and practitioners have proposed a range of models to account for the development of learner autonomy (Benson, 1997; Blin, 2005; Macaro, 1997; Nunan, 1997). Nunan (1997) and Blin (2004, 2005) have concentrated on independent interaction with learning materials and educational technologies, while Benson (1997, 2001) emphasized learner control and Macaro (1997) the developmental process of learner autonomy.

Nunan's Five-level Model

To foster learner autonomy inside the classroom, Nunan (1997) proposes a five-level model. In his scheme, five levels are outlined for developing learner autonomy: awareness, involvement, intervention, creation and transcendence. Learners' awareness is viewed as the first step towards learner autonomy because it helps learners understand the learning goal and context. Learners are expected to become aware of the pedagogical goals and identify their own preferred learning strategies or styles. Learners are encouraged to move from awareness to active involvement in the learning process and then make choices among a range of options. This is an intermediate stage, with the act of choosing being more important than the actual learning task itself, because it involves learner decision making. Next, learners are encouraged to intervene in the learning process by modifying learning goals or choosing learning content, moving on to creation that embraces learners setting their own goals, updating learning content and creating learning tasks. At the heart of learner autonomy is transcendence, which requires the learner to make connections between the content of the classroom and the world beyond the classroom. At this level, learners take responsibility for their own learning, and learn to be effective language users, gradually becoming truly autonomous language learners.

Macaro's Three-Stage Model

Macaro (1997) advances a three-stage model for the development of L2 learner autonomy. Autonomy is conceptualized in terms of language competence, language learning competence, and choice and action. Autonomy is not an all-or-nothing concept, but an ability to be developed.

In this three-stage model, the development of autonomy is viewed as a gradual process. Autonomy of language competence means the development of communicative competence, including linguistic, strategic, and sociolinguistic competence. With a reasonable mastery of the L2 rule system, the learner is expected to use the target language without the help of others. Autonomy of language learning competence involves the learners’ ability to reproduce or transfer the acquired L2 skills and strategies to other learning contexts. The potential in the learner is tapped in such a way that cognitive and metacognitive strategies are activated. Autonomy of choice and action requires the learner to create opportunities to exercise learner autonomy.

Learner autonomy is a developmental process, and all language learners are, to a lesser or greater degree, autonomous. From this perspective, the key to learner autonomy is the opportunity to further develop these abilities.

Benson's Three-Level-Control Model

In Benson’s (2001) model, autonomy is viewed as the capacity to take control of one’s learning. Control is at the heart of this model, and is exercised at three levels: learning management, cognitive process, and learning content. The technical version of autonomy encourages learners to take control of their learning management; the psychological version channels them to exercise control of their cognitive processes, and the political version concerns
the individual’s capacity to choose the content to be learned.

The three levels of control are viewed as interdependent: learning management relies heavily upon control of the cognitive processes in learning, and control of cognitive processes affects the self-management of learning. Both of these involve decision-making about learning content. The model covers the major aspects of learner autonomy, integrating self-management, psychological readiness and political control in the language learning process, prompting language learners to exercise more control in the learning process.

Blin’s Activity Theory-Driven Model

Blin (2004, 2005) examines and evaluates learner autonomy in relation to CALL applications from the perspective of Activity Theory. The model identifies the potential gap in previous CALL applications and research in that they fail to provide adequate tools and models to investigate the development or exercising of learner autonomy. A shift is attempted from ‘language learning as the principal object’ to ‘language use and learner autonomy as motives for the overall activity’ (Blin, 2004, p. 387), and CALL is seen as a tool for language learners to exercise control and develop learner autonomy. In Blin’s (2004) view learner autonomy embraces both independence and interdependence. The former entails taking responsibility for one’s own learning (setting objectives and making informed decisions), while the latter implies interaction between students and teachers. Both allow language learners to exercise control over their learning process. New technology is used to trigger more pedagogical innovations, fostering learner autonomy in an EFL context.

A DOUBLE-CHANNEL MODEL FOR DEVELOPING LEARNER AUTONOMY IN AN EFL CONTEXT

The new approach, termed the Double-Channel Model, was developed by the authors from the notion that learner autonomy is more than an intrapersonal developmental process, as presented by Macaro (1997), because it involves both independent learning and interdependent learning, as exemplified by Blin, (2004, 2005). EFL students need to take responsibility for their own learning and communicate with others in English, developing autonomy ‘in an interpersonal environment which supports it’ (Littlewood, 1999, p. 75).

This new Double-Channel Model recognizes that learner needs are diverse (Cai, 2006; Chen & Qu, 2002; You, 2004): some EFL students need to cultivate receptive skills through authentic English resources, and others need to develop productive skills by communicating ideas in English. It also recognizes that opportunities for English communication in the EFL context can be limited, and the textbook-based, teacher-led and test-oriented English learning is deemed to be unfit for global academic communication (Guo & Yan, 2007; Hu, 2005; Wang, 2007). It also takes account of the fact that EFL students in China’s higher education system are encouraged to use modern educational technology to support autonomy-oriented English learning (Zhang, Yue, & Liu, 2001; Shao & Wu, 2007; Xiao, 2002). The Double Channel Model incorporates the need for both self-directed and socially-mediated learning (Figure 1).

Central to the Double-Channel Model is the autonomous learning platform (ALP), which consists of four components:
1. The e-course makes EFL input easier with the supply of authentic language;
2. The e-monitoring tool helps to digest the English language input and produce English language output, providing the learner with linguistic feedback;
3. The e-revision provides scaffolding from a more capable other e.g., native English speakers or EFL teachers;
4. The e-forum facilitates students’ English interactions online.

Self-Directed Learning

The ALP was designed by EFL teachers at the Harbin Institute of Technology (HIT), China to provide dynamic and nonlinear access to a wide range of authentic English learning materials, which included presentations at international conferences, abstract writing, research paper writing, summary writing and English essay writing.

The E-Course

The e-course offered audio and video clips of English native speakers for the EFL learners to study (audio clips were recorded by the Eng-
lish teachers working at HIT and video clips were bought from the market). To supplement classroom-based learning, additional materials were stored as digital multimedia. These authentic English resources ranged from conference speeches to academic lectures and provided insights into how English is constructed, and the power of the language in real world communication.

To facilitate academic writing, the e-course provided the EFL students with additional linguistic resources, including the use of set phrases to raise questions, discuss problems or limitations:

One major drawback of this approach is that...

One question that needs to be asked, however, is whether...

One of the limitations with this explanation is that it does not explain why... this method of analysis has a number of limitations...

Overall, the e-course offered EFL students options and flexibility leading to different levels of interactivity. At low levels, EFL students could click into sections they were interested in, and develop an understanding of the discourse in action; at medium levels, they could read model essays produced by native speakers and develop their critical reflections; with high levels, students were motivated to contact more competent others, who provided scaffolding. The e-course helped students become more independent and resourceful in their out-of-class studies.

E-Monitoring

To encourage self-initiated English learning, an e-monitoring tool was available. The e-monitoring module was developed by the IT team at HIT (Wang, 2002), and could be used to monitor the student input and output in terms of vocabulary rank, average sentence length, prepositions, logical connectors, modal verbs, verb-ing forms, and T-units. It provided a clear picture about the level of vocabulary at which they handle the text, and transferred responsibility from the teacher to the learner.

Figure 2 is the front page and the menu for the system; Figure 3 shows how students can practise specific aspects of the language, such as vocabulary, conjunctions, set phrases. Figure 4 is the navigation system that allowed EFL students to monitor their work. By clicking the button ‘Essay evaluation’ (the last line in Figure 3), a student’s essay appears in the window (Figure 4). The button ‘Essay evaluation’ shows a comparison between the student essay and the ‘Model Essay’ in terms of vocabulary rank, average sentence length, prepositions, logical connectors, modal verbs, verb-ing forms, and T-units (Figure 4 and Figure 5). For instance, the second bin showed the average sentence length (17.16 vs. 24.75), and the eighth bin indicated the number of prepositions used (26 vs. 34). Although the feedback is limited, the e-monitoring system may prompt EFL students to refine his/her English essay by reference to the essay produced by a native speaker.

Socially-Mediated Learning

Autonomous learning does not mean to learn on one’s own (Benson, 2005; Pemberton, 1996), and EFL students are encouraged to learn English in a participation framework (Littlewood, 1999). Within the ALP, socially-mediated learning was highlighted to develop English proficiency through communication.

The E-Forum

To cultivate English proficiency, EFL learners need a supportive environment. An e-forum, via the QQ group chatting tool, was incorporated to facilitate social interactions online. The e-forum opened up opportunities for student-student interactions to resolve the problem of learning English in isolation. The participants were postgraduate students in different departments, who seldom met face to face, and they were offered the opportunity to discuss a range of topics online.
Figure 2. ALP navigation system 1

Figure 3. ALP navigation system 2
The e-forum was used to create a context of transfer, where EFL students could put what they learned into use by exchanging ideas about English study or research work, and raising questions for group discussion. This added a communicative dimension to English study and led to ‘autonomous interdependence’ (Littlewood, 1999; Ryan, 1991).

**E-Revision**

The e-revision operated against the notion of ‘one size for all.’ As learner needs for feedback varied from person to person, the e-revision was used to help resolve complex problems individually or in collaboration with others. The students were free to choose their ‘advisers’ or ‘mentors’, who would guide the student by providing substantial revision feedback. In this way, scaffolding from a more capable other was used to help the students who needed variable amounts of feedback to improve their writing proficiency. During this process, students took control of their learning activities, and engaged in an active learning process.

**THE STUDY**

The experimental study set out to examine the impact of the Double-Channel Model upon the autonomous learning of EFL students, specifically to evaluate the impact of ALP exposure on academic writing proficiency. The mixed methods approach adopted for this study enabled the investigators to collect and analyze data, integrate the findings, and draw inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single study (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007). Data from the EFL essay writing tasks at pre-test and post-test were collected to answer this research question, and semi-structured interviews provided supporting qualitative data in relation to learner autonomy.
Participants and Experiment

The participants were postgraduates majoring in science and technology at HIT, China. Stratified sampling divided participants into three groups of 30 students. Each group comprised equal numbers of high, medium, and low level proficiency students, based on their national English test scores (CET Band 4). All the participants had normal classroom EFL teaching once a week plus extra study time after class. The participants in the intervention group (IG) were provided with access to the ALP. Participants in the control group A (CGA) were given traditional textbooks for use during extra study time, and the participants in control group B (CGB) worked without the ALP or textbooks. All the participants involved in this study were administered the same essay prompt at pre-test and post-test, which was “Should postgraduates have English courses?”

Essay writing was used because writing English at discourse level is an academic imperative for students at HIT. English writing occurs in numerous contexts from classrooms to laboratories and determines the academic status and career development of the students. The title was appropriate because the topic relates to the participants’ speaking and writing English for academic purposes, and permitted them to present their views on the issue under investigation. The pre-test and post-test differences measured any change in the participants’ writing proficiency.

Data Collection Procedure

In the experimental study, quantitative data concerning EFL students’ English academic writing proficiency at pre-test and post-test was collected. To assess the autonomous learning of the participants, qualitative data from semi-
structured interviews was gathered. During the course of the study, three focus groups and nine sessions of individual interviews were held. All of the semi-structured interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed, and coded by the researchers.

**Collecting the Data from English Essays**

The English essay pre-test commenced at the beginning of the spring semester with the post-test completed at the end of the spring semester at HIT. At pre-test, each participant from the three groups (IG, CGA, and CGB) was asked to write an English essay on the topic: *Should postgraduates have English courses?* A 50-minute time limit was imposed for all participants.

At post-test, the same essay topic was assigned to the participants, measuring any change of their English writing proficiency, again with a 50-minute time limit. The essays were blind-marked by three EFL teachers, according to the weighted scoring system derived from Hughes (2003), which has an emphasis on analytic scoring for content, organization, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics (Appendix A).

**Collecting Data from Semi-Structured Interviews**

Three focus group interviews were held for the informants from the IG, CGA, and CGB groups. Each session of focus group interviews lasted 45 minutes. The confidential interviews lasted about 30 minutes, with nine informants, three from each group. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with the interview guides shown in Appendix B.

**DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

**Quantitative Results**

Two-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted on the total essay scores and the related subscales with group and proficiency as the independent variables, the pre-test score as the covariate, and the post-test score as the dependent variable. The results of ANCOVA showed that there was a main effect of group on the essay subscales of content and organization, but no significant effect was found for proficiency group. There was no interaction effect, showing group was relevant to all levels of proficiency. For those dependent variables, which were not normally distributed, a Kruskal-Wallis test was applied which revealed that there was a significant effect of group on the essay subscales of vocabulary and grammar. The results are summarized in Table 1 which presents the mean and standard deviations of each dependent variable at pre-test and post-test for each group.
The quantitative data analyses indicate that the IG tend to outperform the CGA and the CGB in terms of content \((p < .001)\), organization \((p < .002)\), vocabulary \((p < .001)\), grammar \((p < .001)\) and total essay scores \((p < .001)\). The EFL students in the IG scored significantly higher on the total essay scores than those in the CGA \((p < .001)\) and the CGB \((p < .001)\). English academic writing proficiency is seen to change with the experimental conditions, with the ALP-based students achieving significantly greater progress, at all levels of analysis, than either control groups.

**Qualitative Results**

In the semi-structured interviews, the participants in the ALP group tended to share a common belief that they usually learned English in a technology-rich but English communication-poor learning environment regardless of their proficiency. They expected to learn English from native speakers, and in their extra English study they wanted opportunities to exchange ideas with native speakers of English, or someone more competent in English. However, in the EFL context, such opportunities were rare, leading many students to conduct their self-directed English learning outside the classroom.

To improve their English proficiency, seven out of nine participants in the intervention group (IG) considered the autonomous learning platform (ALP) helpful in their extra English study. For example, Jiantao (note: all names have been anonymised), a low level English learner, reported, “I found it convenient to learn English via the ALP because it provided me with choice of learning materials”. In his view, the ALP was helpful to “improve my English proficiency in my own space”. Lingyu, a medium proficient EFL learner, also benefited from the ALP-based English learning:

“\[quote\]
I spend my days in my lab, working on a research project of wafer transfer robot. I seldom speak, including in my mother tongue, Chinese, not to mention English. For my degree, I wrote my research paper. The lack of academic writing experience frustrated me because I had no idea how to write in English. I turned to the ALP which offered me English learning opportunities.\
\[quote-end\]”

For Lingyu, the e-course provided models for writing English papers. He learned to write his introduction section by following the ‘four moves’ of the model paper: establishing the field by stating current knowledge, summarizing previous research by describing key characteristics, preparing for current research by indicating a gap, and introducing his own research work. Lingyu claimed that the ALP enabled him to learn English flexibly as he was able to choose when and where to learn English outside the classroom.

In the focus group interview, some participants held the view that the ALP provided them with self-initiated learning opportunities. Longxing, a high proficiency student, used the e-revision of the ALP to get feedback from more competent others and develop his English writing skills:

“\[quote\]
The e-revision allowed me to obtain feedback from the English teacher and my classmates. Their advice and support helped me to correct my mistakes and revise my English writing. Through e-revision, I learned to express my ideas in good English.\
\[quote-end\]”

Longxing explained that with the ALP, he learned to refine his English writing. The ALP gave him choice and allowed him to interact with more competent others, from whom he learned to cultivate his English writing skills. The e-revision involved socially-mediated scaffolding, which facilitated English proficiency in an EFL context.

A number of participants reported that the e-forum offered them a platform to communicate in English outside the classroom. Fangdong, a medium proficiency level student, revealed that in the past he learned English in the classroom but found it hard to use. The ALP made a difference “Through the e-forum, I exchanged
ideas with others in English outside the classroom”. Interacting with his peers, Fangdong felt that he got involved in real life English communication. In his view, both sides of the communication achieved the goal to improve their English proficiency. Without the ALP, the accomplishment of the goal would be difficult for either of them.

The e-monitoring tool was used to digest the input text in terms of vocabulary level, average sentence length, and logical connectors. Fangdong employed the tool in a self-directed manner:

“To improve my English writing, I used e-monitoring to identify a range of features of a model essay, and then I tried to emulate the style of the model essay. Learning in this way, I felt I became more resourceful and confident in my English writing.”

The ALP appeared to provide a context of transfer where the students could develop their English proficiency on their own initiative, cultivating receptive skills through the e-course, communicating with others via the e-forum, and seeking feedback by means of e-revision.

Without access to the ALP, a number of participants in the control groups tended to use ICT as an optional learning resource. Being aware of the poor English learning environment, Qihong, a high proficiency student, stated that “We are born in a non-native English speaking country, and all people around us speak Chinese. We need to double our efforts to learn English communication”, and developed his English proficiency using the learning resources on the internet, and viewed himself as ‘an online resource explorer’:

“Browsing on the websites and searching for English papers online led me to love self-directed English learning. The more resources I explored, the more I felt the need to learn on my own initiative.”

Asked about a better way to develop their English proficiency outside the classroom, some control group students reported that they attended online chat-rooms. Gaohai, a high proficiency participant, claimed that “chatting online offered me opportunities to express ideas in English and helped me to communicate with different English speakers.”

The data from the semi-structured interviews suggest that there is a slight difference across the three groups with regard to their perspective on the usefulness of the ALP/ICT. The subtle difference might stem from the fact that although the students in the three groups needed more authentic English learning materials to cultivate their English proficiency, the students in the IG had access to English writing resources via the ALP, whereas the students in the CGA and the CGB had to hunt for such English learning resources on their own, which the study results indicate was a less efficient approach. However, most of the EFL students in the three groups appeared to use the ALP or self-directed ICT resources for improving their English proficiency in a technology-rich but English communication-poor environment.

**DISCUSSION**

In the present study, the Double-Channel Model of the ALP promotes learner autonomy in an EFL context. Due to the shortage of English learning resources in an EFL context, most of the students in the IG took the ALP as an additional learning resource to draw upon. They used the ALP to develop their English proficiency and exercised learner control in their extra English study. Through the e-course, they cultivated their English proficiency in their own space. Some of them used the e-monitoring tool to digest the input text and practised their English writing with reference to the model essays. The e-revision allowed them to benefit from scaffolding and the e-forum offered opportunities to get involved in English communication,
transferring knowledge and skills in an EFL context.

With regard to the limitations of the ALP, some of the students using the ALP revealed that the English learning materials were not updated. Also, the e-forum was considered time-consuming because of so-called ‘simple and superficial entries.’ The lack of personal contact discouraged some EFL students from using the ALP in their extra English study. This seems to be resonant with Blin’s (2004) point of view that technology enhanced language learning (TELL) may be used to promote certain aspects of learner autonomy such as learning at one’s own pace, freedom to choose materials, and the opportunity to exercise some control over the learning process (Blin, 2004, 2005). Hence, the ALP should not be taken as a one-method-suits-all approach.

As a growing number of English students “seem to possess adequate IT and metacognitive skills, and even within the constraints of the language program, they seem to be able to find spaces where they can exercise some autonomy” (Tschirhart & Rigler, 2009, p. 81). Teachers of English should direct more attention to technology-supported English learning outside the classroom (Figura & Jarvis, 2007), and encourage students to get involved in “online collaborative and interactive learning activities” (Miwa & Wang, 2011, p. 66). English teachers in an EFL context should maximize English learning opportunities via CALL and provide students with “a more process-oriented style of learning” (Nguyen & White, 2011, p. 14). By providing the easiest access to English resources, “appropriate forms of scaffolding and output presentation” (Sun, Chang, & Yang, 2011, p. 46), English teachers can help EFL students to become more autonomous than before. Viewed thus, more technology-supported educational interventions should be used to “cater for different learning styles” (Reguzzoni, 2009, p. 143), and allow students to experience the growth of learner autonomy.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, models associated with the development of learner autonomy were reviewed, with CALL viewed as a potential tool to exercise learner control and develop autonomy in the language learning process. Based on the previous studies, a new double-channel model for developing learner autonomy was proposed, which emphasized self-directed learning and socially-mediated learning. This model led to the construction of an autonomous learning platform (ALP) to develop English proficiency. The e-course was used to facilitate English input, the e-monitoring tool to provide linguistic feedback, the e-revision provided scaffolding, and the e-forum strengthened English communication. The double-channel model offers a new option in developing learner autonomy in a technology-rich but English communication-poor environment.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We would like to express our thanks to the journal editor and the reviewers for their constructive feedback and insightful advice. Our sincere thanks also go to all the participating students at Harbin Institute of Technology (HIT), China, for their generous cooperation. Their willingness to share their English learning experiences made the task of data collection enjoyable and rewarding.

REFERENCES


Jinghui Wang is a professor of Applied Linguistics at the Harbin Institute of Technology, China. He obtained his MA at Beijing Foreign Studies University (1991), and PhD in the University of Reading, UK (2011). His research interests are discourse cross cultures, metacognitive beliefs and strategies and e-learning in languages. He has published in the areas of English academic writing, language and culture, intercultural communication and autonomous learning.

Kenneth A. Spencer, PhD, lectures on technological approaches to learning in the Faculty of Education, University of Hull, UK. His research has been published in a wide range of international journals, focusing on the effectiveness of technology in education. His current research field investigates the efficiency of writing systems.

Dongshuo Wang is a student in the Education Department of the University of Manchester. She applies learning theories into practice and has conducted researches in languages, linguistics and cultures. She has research results published in journals and books in language learning, language and communication and learning strategies.


## APPENDIX A

**Weighted scoring system for rating EFL essays (total score: 50)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Weighted scoring</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(15/50)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15–13</td>
<td>Fully developed thesis, with strong evidence, writing task effectively addressed. Distinct, relevant, and credible supporting reasons and details.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12–10</td>
<td>Clearly developed thesis with generalized support. Clear progression of ideas, persuasive argument, developed with evidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9–7</td>
<td>Underdeveloped thesis/weak support, writing task inadequately addressed. The argument developed with insufficient evidence; ideas not clearly communicated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6–4</td>
<td>Vague thesis/weak support. Evidence to support argument is inconsistent and incomplete; with little or no details.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3–1</td>
<td>Writing task poorly addressed; lack of convincing reasons and details, argument incomplete and not persuasive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Failure to convey any relevant information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organisation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10/50)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10–9</td>
<td>Well-structured with coherent focus and effective transitions. Ideas well linked and presented logically with strong beginning, middle and end.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8–7</td>
<td>Clearly structured and focused with effective transitions. Ideas are generally related but inconsistently ordered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6–5</td>
<td>Lack of organisation and poor transitions; ideas are inconsistently related or ordered. Poorly-structured beginning, middle or end.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4–3</td>
<td>Lack of focus and confusing structure with ineffective transitions. Ideas are poorly related or ordered, inadequate development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2–1</td>
<td>Lacking in structure and organisation; vaguely recognizable structure; weak beginning, middle or end.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Failure to communicate content, total lack of structures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vocabulary</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10/50)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10–9</td>
<td>Range of vocabulary is impressive and verified, mastery of standard English, effective words. Wording enhances meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8–7</td>
<td>Adequate range of vocabulary reflects a good grasp of the language. Appropriate diction, producing a style which reads easily. Wording contributes to meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6–5</td>
<td>Attempt to use constructions above the basic level, but with limitations to the range of vocabulary, some errors in usage, but meaning not obscured.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4–3</td>
<td>Vocabulary is not adequate to the writing task, a repetitive style and a frequent failure to communicate the content effectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2–1</td>
<td>Vocabulary and structures are barely recognizable. Limited knowledge of English vocabulary and simplistic diction. Communication severely impaired.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Poor word choice, fail to communicate content.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*continued on the following page*
Weighted scoring system for rating EFL essays (total score: 50) continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Weighted scoring</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grammar</strong> (10/50)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>10–9</td>
<td>Effective use in complex constructions, variety of sentence structure; sound grammatical awareness: few errors of agreement, tense, pronouns, prepositions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>8–7</td>
<td>Variety of sentence structures, correct tenses and verb endings, good mastery of gender and case. Minor grammatical errors, but meaning seldom obscured.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>6–5</td>
<td>Varied sentence construction, frequent grammatical errors such as negation, agreement, number, pronouns, word order. Meaning more or less impaired.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4–3</td>
<td>Major problems in sentence construction make the text difficult to follow. Meaning confused or impaired.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2–1</td>
<td>Little awareness of grammatical structure. English is inaccurate to communicate; errors interfere with readability.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No knowledge of grammatical structure. Non-standard English makes the language indecipherable.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Mechanics** (5/50) |       |                  |                                                                        |
| 5              | 5     | Mastery of conventions, correct punctuation, spelling, capitalisation, paragraphing. |
| 4              | 4     | Minor errors in punctuation, spelling, capitalisation, paragraphing. |
| 3              | 3     | Some errors in punctuation, spelling capitalisation, paragraphing. |
| 2              | 2     | Frequent errors in punctuation, spelling and format interfere with comprehension, with meaning obscured. |
| 1              | 1     | Poor mastery of conventions, dominated by errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalisation, paragraphing. Difficult to evaluate. |
| 0              | 0     | No mastery of conventions, errors in spelling or punctuation so serious as to make comprehension impossible. |

**APPENDIX B**

**Semi-Structured Interview Guides**

1. Which do you prefer self-directed or socially-mediated learning?
2. What role do you think a teacher plays in your English study?
3. How do you develop your English proficiency outside the classroom? What learning strategies are often used?
4. What are the main problems in your writing? How do you handle them?
5. What role does the autonomous learning platform (ALP) play in your extra English study? What are the advantages and pitfalls of the ALP?
6. What’s your comment on the e-course, e-monitoring, e-revision and e-forum?
7. What’s your comment on the role of ICT in your English study?
8. What are the differences between your past English study and your present English study?
9. Do you think you became more autonomous than before? In what way?