

A Study on the Autonomous Learning Validity of Chinese EFL Students*

Guobing Liu

School of Foreign Languages, Henan Normal University, Xinxiang, China

Abstract—In accordance with the autonomous learning theory, the present study mainly reports the validity of junior middle school students' English autonomous learning and explores the strategies to improve students' English level by the teaching experiment between two classes of Grade Eight in one of the key schools in Henan, China. The researcher selects 115 students as the research subjects who are from two classes of Grade Eight and the teaching experiment lasts for 18 weeks. In this research, the subjects are investigated with questionnaires and interviews. The research results show that students in class one who learn in autonomous ways have higher remarks than those in class two who learn in traditional ways. Students are quite interested in learning English and their ability of autonomous learning has been promoted with the teaching mode of autonomous learning. From the experiment results, it is shown that students' learning ability can be improved with the training of the autonomous learning strategies. Based on the research results and the current learning situation, some suggestions on cultivating students' ability of English learning is put forward in the end of this thesis.

Index Terms—validity, autonomous learning, Chinese EFL students

I. INTRODUCTION

The English curriculum standards propose that the main goal of education is to develop students' comprehensive ability of using language. It also advocates teachers to adopt new teaching methods which can help to improve students' learning effects and students are encouraged to grasp the language through practice and exploration with the guidance of teachers (the National Ministry of Education, 2011). Teachers need to create specific conditions to develop students' ability of autonomous learning and make sure that students' comprehensive ability is promoted in the learning process. The key point of English curriculum standards is that teachers should alter the old teaching mode which focuses on teaching knowledge and explore the new teaching mode which pays special attention to cultivate students' capacity of applying knowledge and autonomous learning. Therefore, changing the traditional teaching mode is the cardinal task in language teaching.

Autonomous learning is one of the most important educational research fields and it is also the urgent need of the current education reform (Jiang Hui, 2008). Modern educationists advocate that students' initiatives should be promoted and teachers should change the traditional teaching mode. Autonomous learning can help to improve the traditional teaching mode and foster students' overall development. Cultivating students' learning ability is a mission that teachers meet in English teaching. This research explores several learning strategies to promote students' ability of autonomous learning through the experiment of learning English autonomously. If the learners' ability of autonomous learning is promoted, the desire for learning knowledge can be inspired and students can possess the sense of innovation in learning (Liu Runqing, 1999). So autonomous learning is in favor of the sustainable development of humans as well.

Autonomous learning is a new learning mode advocated by the English curriculum standards and it advocates students' overall development. Autonomous learning helps to develop students' intelligence and also influences their exploitation of non-intellectual factors. Every student is an individual and they are different in many aspects such as interests, attitudes, motivations and so on. However, teachers who teach in a traditional way neglect students' differences. As a result, students have the low learning efficiency. Therefore, teachers should design their teaching procedure which based on students' individual deference and help students explore the proper learning strategies. Students' learning efficiency can be promoted greatly if they grasp the autonomous learning strategies.

The study of autonomous learning can enrich the autonomous learning theory, and also can offer the effective reference to the further studies. The research on autonomous learning helps to stimulate students' learning interests and helps to improve their learning effects. It also benefits teachers to change their teaching ideas and guides teachers to cultivate students' ability of autonomous learning by the proper strategies.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Basic Issues about Autonomous Learning

* This research was supported financially in part by the Teacher Education Reform Project of Henan Province (Project No.: 2016- JSJYYB -026) and the Teaching Reform Project of Henan Normal University (2015).

Since 1980s, educational researchers have attached importance to autonomous learning. Different researchers have different views of this theory, therefore the term of autonomous learning is so difficult to be defined. This study introduces some definitions of autonomous learning by scholars at abroad and home to provide fundamental basis for the further researches on autonomous learning. Holec introduced “learner autonomy” into foreign language teaching in his work named *Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning*. He states that autonomous learning is such a phenomenon learners have the ability of taking charge of their own learning. Learners decide their own objectives, define the contents they learn and the course progression, select methods they use and monitor the learning process in the learning (Holec, 1981). Dickinson (1978) defines autonomous learning as a situation in which the learners take charge of all the decisions related to the learning and are also in control of carrying out these decisions. In the real practice of autonomous learning, Dickinson (1978) states that autonomous learners can choose their own contents, study independently, decide learning process and when and where to study, choose learning materials, monitor themselves and test themselves. Benson and Voller (1997) state that autonomous learning refers to learners study without teachers’ interaction and create learning chances including learning time, places and contents. In addition, Benson summarizes the following aspects of autonomous learning. First, learners’ study depends on themselves. Second, learners apply the learning skills to the learning. Third, learners are in control of their learning. Fourth, learners have the authority of deciding their goals of study. Nunan (1995) states that learners who set goals and create learning opportunities are autonomous learners.

Most of the studies show that students play an important part in learning and should learn with learning skills, based on the above definitions of autonomous learning (Little, 1991; Dickinson, 1995). It emphasizes that students should rely on themselves, not teachers. Benson, Voller and Nunan have the same idea that students create learning circumstances and opportunities and they are responsible for their learning. However, they ignore the teachers’ roles in the teaching. This the difference that Benson, Voller and Nunan and the other scholars hold when they defined this term.

B. Studies of Autonomous Learning in China

In China, the studies on autonomous learning are later than those in western countries and many studies are on the basis of theoretical researches in foreign countries. Lin Yuqi (1987) puts forward that autonomous learning not only contains learning methods but also contains self-recognition, self-decision, self-cultivation and self-control. He also proposes that autonomous learning should follow the principles of pertinence and interestingness.

Cheng Xiaotang (1999) states autonomous learning contains three aspects. First, autonomous learning is an internal mechanism which dominates learning and it includes learning attitudes, capacity, learning skills and others. Autonomous learning is that learners have the ability of guiding and controlling their learning process. Second, autonomous learning is that learners take charge of their learning goals, contents and materials. Third, autonomous learning is a teaching mode in which learners set goals and achieve goals under the guidance of teachers. Cheng Xiaotang also has a profound study on the definition of learning autonomy and her comprehensive elaborations are conducive to the related studies.

Recently, a great many researchers survey learners’ current learning situations and study the application of autonomous learning (Ren Xiaohua, 2015). The researches show that most learners have the weak consciousness of autonomous learning and learners of different levels behave differently in learning process. The measures of improving learners’ autonomy are put forward which based on the current learning situation. Although the researchers study in different ways, they reveal the real situation of autonomous learning from a variety of views and help to explore the autonomous learning methods at the same time.

In addition, a large amount of researches are focused on the autonomous learning strategies. Pang Guowei expounds the teaching and learning strategies systematically in his work. He puts forward that the autonomous learning mode should be formed both from the macroscopic perspective and microscopic perspective. In his opinion, it is learners who learn first by themselves and then teachers teach them during the learning. Besides, teachers must introduce autonomous learning strategies to students which can promote students to learn actively (Pang Guowei, 2001; 2003). The study on autonomous learning is in favor of perfecting autonomous learning strategies.

C. Studies of Autonomous Learning in Other Countries

Autonomous learning at abroad can date back to the ancient Greek and numerous western educationalists put forward the idea of learning autonomy (Wenden, 1998; Schunk, 1989). However, they mainly focus on the theoretical study instead of verifying their ideas. As the earliest one, the famous philosopher and educator Socrates has proposed autonomous learning. Since the 1960s, with the development of humanism, foreign educators have advocated that cultivating learners’ ability of autonomous learning is the final goal of education. From the 1970s, numerous scholars have studied autonomous learning theories and they have introduced it to the language teaching. In the 1980s, Holec first proposed learning autonomy and he introduced autonomous learning into foreign language teaching. He states that autonomous learning is the ability of being responsible for one’s own learning (Holec, 1981). In this period, researchers take autonomous learning as the learners’ independent learning. Since the 1990s, scholars make further studies on the factors which affect autonomous learning, and how to cultivate learners’ ability of autonomous learning and so on (William & Burden, 1997). The studies also include politics, psychology and other fields of autonomy. For example, Benson & Voller (1997) proposes that autonomy focuses on the importance of the “psychological” or “internal”

capacities of the learner, such as learning styles, cognitive, learning attitudes and so on. Some educationalists also concentrate on the social levels of autonomous learning. They believe that learners' autonomy can be developed and cultivated by the social learning guide.

The western scholars conduct their researches on autonomous learning in a very systematical way. Western scholars not only place the particular emphasis on the theory of autonomy, but also concentrate on the application of autonomous learning to the teaching. They insist on their opinions and also absorb the excellent achievements from other research fields. They emphasize students' subjective initiatives in the learning process. Meanwhile, many scholars explore the learning strategies of autonomy and obtain certain results. These researches enrich the autonomous learning theory and promote the language teaching.

III. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

A. Subjects

The subjects of this survey are 115 students in Class One and Class Two of the Attached Middle School of Henan Normal University. Sixty-five are boys and fifty are girls among the students. The reason why the author chooses students of Grade Eight is that first, students in Grade 8 have the certain English skills after one year's study of English and they have been already adapted to the English teaching in the junior middle school. Second, students in Grade Eight have a burning desire for knowledge and hope to get better grades so they have the aspiration of autonomous learning.

B. Instruments

(1) Questionnaire

The questionnaire is designed mainly based on the research content and it contains learning attitudes, motivations, methods, abilities and so on. Meanwhile this questionnaire investigates the specific behaviors of students' learning. The questionnaire is conducted among 115 students. All the students must be informed that they should answer the questions of the questionnaire according to their true representation without discussion before answering these questions. They can get advice from the teacher if they meet any problem during finishing the questionnaire. After the questionnaire, their answers of each question in the questionnaire will be calculated and analyzed by the researcher.

(2) Interview

The researcher will interview some students in two classes of Grade Eight about their current situations of English autonomous learning before the experiment of autonomous learning. The interview is convenient and feasible and the interviewer can get more reliable information from students. The questions of interview are easy to answer which are about students' ability of autonomous learning. The author chooses 20 students to have the interview. Ten are boys and ten are girls among these students. Students who are chosen are of different levels, so their interview records can reflect the current learning situation accurately. On the basis of students' characteristics, the questions of this interview conclude different aspects of learning. The interviewer will tell students the aims and objectives of this interview and students can answer questions without misgiving before the students have the interview. In the interview, the interviewer will note down the interviewees' answers in order to collate the information.

(3) Pre-test and Post-test

Testing students is a good way of verifying students' learning effects. Two tests will be given to students in two classes. One is given before the experiment of autonomous learning which is called pre-test. This test is to examine students' level of English in two classes and verify whether there is the significant difference between two classes. After the test, students in Class One would learn English through the experiment of learning in autonomous ways, while students in Class Two would learn English in the traditional ways. The other test is held after the experiment called post-test. This test is to verify whether the students in Class one have the higher English level than those in Class Two. The scores of two tests will be analyzed after the experiment, in order to prove if autonomous learning is helpful for students to learn English.

C. The Experiment Process

The searcher tries to study the validity of English autonomous learning and discusses how to improve students' ability of autonomous learning by several ways. The experiment of autonomous learning lasts for about sixteen weeks which is from September 1st to the last day of December in 2015. Students will learn how to study English in autonomous ways through the experiment. Class one from grade eight is the experimental class which has 56 students while Class two is the control class in which 59 students learn English in the traditional ways. The author adopts measures of autonomous learning to teach students in class one. Conversely, the author teaches students in class two in traditional ways. After the experiment of autonomous learning which lasts for sixteen weeks, students in two classes would have an exam to test if autonomous learning methods are in favor of improving students' English learning effects.

In the experiment of autonomous learning, the teacher asks students to provide at least one question in each day. Then students will write down answers in their notebooks and then summarize them. Many students ask questions actively and some of the questions are from the extracurricular books which are more difficult than those in the textbook. Some students also discuss the questions in groups. This method can help students find problems by

themselves and solve them actively. In the experiment which lasts for sixteen weeks, those methods are applied to the teaching in class one. And we find most students show great interests on the new teaching methods. Students in class two learn English in the traditional ways. After the experiment, students would have the post-test to verify if autonomous learning is helpful for students to learn English.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Analysis of the Questionnaire

One hundred and fifteen students answered the questions in the questionnaire before the experiment. The questions are about five aspects of learning, i.e., attitudes, students' behaviors in class, methods, learning ability and expectations of learning. The data in the table are accurate to the second decimal place.

TABLE I.
RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Items	Choice A		Choice B		Choice C		Choice D	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
1	22	19.13%	30	26.09%	37	32.17%	26	22.61%
2	30	26.09%	33	28.70%	44	38.26%	8	6.96%
3	10	8.70%	27	50.43%	58	23.48%	20	17.39%
4	51	44.35%	22	19.13%	28	24.35%	14	12.17%
5	25	21.74%	19	16.52%	41	35.65%	30	26.09%
6	19	16.52%	49	42.61%	31	26.96%	16	13.91%
7	15	13.04%	20	17.39%	54	46.96%	26	22.61%
8	19	16.52%	67	58.26%	9	0.78%	20	17.39%
9	12	66.96%	8	6.96%	77	10.43%	18	15.65%
10	16	13.91%	40	34.78%	41	35.65%	18	15.65%
11	7	6.09%	19	16.52%	72	62.61%	17	14.78%
12	13	11.30%	48	41.74%	41	35.65%	13	11.30%
13	7	6.09%	24	20.87%	66	57.39%	18	15.65%
14	73	63.48%	28	24.35%	8	6.96%	6	5.22%
15	14	12.17%	32	27.83%	53	46.09%	16	13.91%
16	20	17.39%	36	31.30%	43	37.39%	16	13.91%
17	18	15.65%	38	33.04%	46	40%	13	11.30%
18	16	13.91%	59	51.30%	28	24.35%	12	10.43%
19	15	13.04%	24	20.87%	61	53.04%	15	13.04%
20	28	24.35%	45	39.13%	26	22.61%	16	13.91%
21	13	11.30%	71	61.74%	17	14.78%	14	12.17%
22	13	11.30%	23	20%	46	40%	31	26.96%
23	36	31.30%	53	46.09%	15	13.04%	11	9.57%

The titles from 1-5 are about students' learning attitudes. From the data, it is known that 32.17% of students think that English is interesting while 26.09% of students think that English is extremely interesting. However, 19.13% of students think English is extremely uninteresting while only a small number of students think English is boring. From the data, it is clearly shown that most of the students are interested in English. On the students' faith in learning, only 6.96% of students don't believe they can learn English well while 93.04% of students believe they can learn English well. It illustrates that most students have faith in learning English and trust themselves to learn English well. About autonomy, 8.70% of students can learn English very autonomously which shows that a small number of students have the consciousness of learning autonomy and can learn autonomously. Besides, 44.35% of students think the purpose of learning is for the admission tests. Thus, it is obvious that tests are very important in students' minds.

The factors affecting students' learning are also important. 35.65% of students think methods and environment mainly affect their learning effects. And 26.09% of students think that learning motivation is very important to them. The items from 6-8 are about students' behaviors in class. 86.09% of students can listen to what teachers said very carefully or can follow the teachers totally in English class. However, only 13.91% of students can't understand the knowledge the teacher taught in class. Based on the statistics, most students sometimes or never join in the learning activities and they seldom take notes. So it can be seen that most students learn English automatically for they only listen to teachers and seldom show their initiatives. This is the most typical current situation of Chinese students in learning English. The items from 9-14 are concerning learning methods. Based on the statistics, 66.96% of students learn English depending on the teachers while 6.96% of students learn English autonomously. It is known that only a few students learn with autonomy. From the data, it is obviously shown that a large number of students don't make plans of learning English or they make plans but never carry them out. In addition, 62.61% of students sometimes preview the new lesson and 57.39% of students sometimes review and summarize the important knowledge points. The data tell us that most students don't learn English in the autonomous ways. The items from 15-22 are about students' ability of autonomous learning. Based on the statistics, it is clearly seen that a large number of students sometimes do extracurricular exercises, but not always. And they seldom analyze the reasons of mistakes and correct them after examinations or explore the proper learning strategies. Besides, 53.04% of students seldom read extracurricular books. It is known that students don't learn English autonomously from the statistics. On the contrary, they learn in traditional

ways passively. So students' ability of autonomous learning needs to be improved. The last item is related to students' expectation of English learning in the future. 46.09% of students hope to learn by themselves and the teacher plays a role as a director or sponsor. This indicates that learners have a desire for autonomous learning.

The above statistics show the current situation of students' ability of autonomous learning. Most Chinese students learn English in the very traditional ways and most of them are lack of initiatives. They mainly depend on teachers for they have no habits of autonomous learning. In a word, students' ability of autonomous learning should be improved.

B. The Analysis of Interviews

Tables II presented a descriptive statistics on each self belief in English writing with a brief description of all these strategies employed and items in the study.

TABLE II.
RESULTS OF THE INTERVIEW

Questions	Answers	A little	No
1. Do you think learning English is difficult?	Yes 20%	50%	30%
2. Do you set goals of learning English?	Yes 35%	Sometimes 40%	No 25%
3. How often do you review lessons?	Every day 25%	Sometimes 60%	Hardly ever 15%
4. What are your learning strategies?	Have own strategies 35%	Copy others' strategies 50%	Have no strategies 15%
5. How do you solve problems in learning?	Solve problems independently 20%	Ask for help 70%	Avoid problems 10%

From the Table II, it is seen that 30% of the students think English is not difficult and 20% of the students think English is difficult. Their answers to the interviewer's questions are quite different. For example, when the interviewer asked the question that whether English is difficult or not, one said: "I don't think English is difficult for me and I can learn it very well." Another one said: "English is a little bit difficult for me so I spend much time on it." But there is also different answer: "English is difficult for me and I don't know how to learn it well." The data show that most students think English is a little difficult, so teachers should alter teaching methods to make students learn English more easily. Besides, 35% of students have goals of learning English while 25% of students never have goals of learning English. Here are the typical answers. One student answered: "I have clear goals of learning English and I study hard to achieve the goals." One said: "Sometimes I have my goals of learning English but I can't achieve them." There is also different answer: "I don't set goals of learning English because I don't know how to set goals."

There is a question about students' habits of revision in the learning. 25% of students have the habits of reviewing lessons every day while 60% of students sometimes review lessons. For example, when the interviewer asked how often students review lessons, one said: "I review lessons every day and summarize the knowledge points after class." Also some students answered, "I sometimes review the new lessons but not often." Another one said: "I don't have the habits of revision so I hardly ever review lessons." All the answers show that only a small number of students have the good habit of revision while most students learn English passively. From the data, we can see 35% of students have their own learning strategies while 15% of students learn English without learning strategies. It can be seen most students have no proper learning strategies. When students are asked how they solve problems in the learning, only 20% of students will solve problems independently while 70% of students ask for help. It is known that only a few students can solve problems independently but most of them depend on others.

From the interview, the researcher finds that different students learn English with different attitudes. The top students have the most active attitude towards learning English and most of them can learn English autonomously. However, the poor students don't spend much time on learning English. The interview results basically reflect the current situation of students' English learning. Students of different levels learn English in different ways which make them have various grades. From the interview records, the interviewer finds that only a few excellent students can learn autonomously while most students have a weak ability of autonomous learning.

C. Factors Affecting Students' Autonomous Learning

From the research results, it is known that junior middle school students have a poor ability of autonomous learning. However, there are a large number of factors which affect students' ability of autonomous learning. Autonomous learning is not only determined by self-control, but also affected by the environment, society, family and so on (Pang Guowei, 2003). It relies on learners and cannot be independent from the external environmental conditions.

(1) Internal Factors

1) Learning Motivations

Wen Qiufang (1996) states that learners are the first factor of success and they are the internal factors in the two-way teaching. Thus, teachers should pay special attention to the students' learning motivations during the daily teaching. Zimmerman (1985; 1999) think that motivation is the intention which causes the activity and maintains the activity. It is an internal power which impulses persons to obtain the goals and the motivation is produced on the basis of needs. So there is a need for learners to have the learning motivation to study efficiently. Learning motivation is an internal factor

that can help learners to learn autonomously. Any activity of persons relies on the motivation. Learners' internal motivation is stimulated by their needs and interests. Learners will control their behaviors actively if they can realize the significance of learning autonomously. Generally, learners have the strong motivations at the beginning of study. However, as the learning difficulty increases, learners' motivations become weak and weak. It is learners' spirit that keeps them studying. In other words, learning motivations have the strong function of keeping learners learning autonomously. Internal learning motivations are in favor of the development of students' ability of autonomous learning. It is known that if students have no learning motivations of learning English, they will not have the real language learning (He Xiaodong, 2005).

2) Attribution Patterns

Attribution can be defined that persons infer the reasons of behavior consequences and then acquire, predict and control the environment and behaviors by the causal relationship (Huang Meihua, 2015). Some researchers believe that attribution patterns are also one of the main factors which affect the autonomous learning. If learners attribute the activity results to the internal factors, and believe that learning process can be changed by controlling individual endeavor, time arrangement and selection of methods which can help learners achieve the goals of study, then they can learn autonomously. If students regard the in exertion as the reason of bad learning results, they will have the stronger motivation and have more desire for perfecting learning skills. Attributing the success to the internal and the controllable factors like capacity can strengthen the learning motivation of activities. On the contrary, attributing the success to the external or uncontrollable elements such as environment or luck can weaken the learning motivation. In addition, feeding back the attribution can also influence the self-efficacy and motivation.

3) The Setting of Learning Goals

Setting learning goals is very important of all the affecting factors. The top students will set goals based on the learning tasks and they monitor their learning and control the learning process according to the goals. Learners must set goals which depend on the complexity of tasks and the goals must be feasible. Besides, the more specific the goals are, the better learners' learning effects are. The research findings show that learners who set mastery goals have stronger self-efficacy and can get better skills than those who set performance targets (Hu Nianhong, 2012). Moreover, the top students basically have the good habits of setting goals and the active attitudes towards learning.

4) Self-Efficacy

Due to the junior middle school students' psychological features, their self-efficacy is extremely weak and they mainly put more reliance on teachers. The psychological features restrict the students' autonomy of learning and lead to their weak consciousness of autonomous learning.

Self-efficacy is that learners judge whether they have the ability of taking up the activities. In fact, self-efficacy is not students' real ability but their confidence in their learning ability based on the self-evaluation (Du Suqing, 2015). Self-efficacy is an important factor which affects autonomous learning (He Dong, 2005). First, learners choose tasks based on their self-efficacy. Students with the high self-efficacy always select the difficult tasks which need their hard-working while students with the low self-efficacy always select easy tasks. Second, self-efficacy greatly influences goals which learners set. Students with the high self-efficacy set high and challenging goals before they study. In the learning process, the students with the high self-efficacy will finally obtain the goals through their hard-working. Third, self-efficacy affects learning methods selected by learners. When learners with the high self-efficacy meet the challenging tasks, they are inclined to work harder and choose much proper leaning strategies. Fourth, the low self-efficacy affects students' emotion. When learners with the low self-efficacy meet the challenging tasks, they will feel nervous and do badly in learning.

(2) External Factors

Of all factors, internal factors are quite important but the external factors are also significant. And external factors which affect autonomous learning greatly are as follows:

1) Teaching Styles of Different Teachers

The teaching styles of different teachers affect the learning of students during the teaching process. Especially, the teaching styles play an important role in learners' autonomous learning. Different teaching styles affect students differently. The arbitrary style and the laissez-fair style hinder students' autonomous learning while the democratic style contributes to the autonomous learning. With the democratic styles, students' ability of independence and self-control are fully improved as well as their autonomy for the lack of the external restriction. Thus, students' interests of learning are stimulated, and they can make efficient plans and feedbacks and evaluate learning results. So there is a need for teachers to teach in a relaxing and democratic style. In modern teaching modes, teachers should focus on students' comprehensive ability and teachers should become the guides and promoters to help students to learn autonomously.

2) Learning Environment

Zimmerman (1995) and other scholars divide the external factors affecting autonomous learning into two categories: the social environment and the class environment. In the social environment, friends, teachers and families play important roles in students' autonomous learning. They are the models for students and can guide students to learn actively. Learners will ask teachers or parents for help if they came across problems in learning. They want to get enlightenments and then think independently. In the class environment, libraries, computers and other information resources also affect learners' autonomous learning. Those information resources can offer much information to learners,

so they can get more extracurricular knowledge based on their needs.

It is clearly known that autonomous learning is affected by a large number of factors. Internal factors are the most important factors for the learners but external factors are also indispensable. Therefore, learners' ability of autonomous learning should be cultivated through both internal and external factors.

V. CONCLUSION

This study combines the autonomous learning theory with practice and applies it to the real English teaching through the experiment. During this research, the researcher applies questionnaire, interview, pre-test and pro-test to investigate Chinese learners' ability of English autonomous learning. Now we conclude the research findings as follows:

First, based on the questionnaire and interview results, it is known that the current learning situation of Chinese junior middle school students is they learn English in traditional ways and have no proper learning strategies. Students are lack of learning motivations and they think learning English aims at tests. Most of them learn English passively instead of learning autonomously. It is shown that students in junior middle school have the low autonomy of learning.

Second, factors affecting students' autonomous learning are found and analyzed according to the research results. The factors contain internal factors and external factors. Learning motivations, attribution patterns, setting goals and self-efficacy are very important to the learners. Moreover, teaching styles and external environment can also affect learning results as well. Thus, teachers should promote students' ability of autonomous learning through the internal and external factors.

Third, according to the pre-test results, there is no significant difference between two classes. However, based on the post-test results, students in class one who learn in the autonomous ways can get the higher marks than students in class two who learn in traditional ways. It is shown that the autonomous learning can help improve students' learning results. In addition, the proper strategies are explored in the experiment which can help to improve students' autonomous learning ability. Through the experiment, students in class one gradually form good habits of autonomous learning and they begin to have the consciousness of autonomous learning. They can set goals and make plans autonomously and have the right attitudes towards English learning. Their motivations of learning are stimulated and most students can evaluate themselves and explore the proper learning methods actively. Moreover, the autonomous learning not only focuses on students' dominant roles but also attaches importance to the teachers' leading roles. The teacher is a promoter and a helper in this new teaching mode. Students will get the suggestions from the teacher when they come across troubles in learning English. So students' autonomous learning cannot be independent from teachers. The teacher's guidance and help are very important to students. They need to teach creatively and adopt new teaching methods to explore the new teaching modes. But the students' learning ability cannot be improved in a short time. So students need to be cultivated in systematical ways for a long time.

REFERENCES

- [1] Benson & Voller. (1997). *Autonomy and Independence in Language Learning*. London: Longman
- [2] Cheng Xiaotang. (1999). On the Autonomous Learning. *Education Science*, (9): 32-35.
- [3] Dickinson L. (1978). Autonomy, self-directed learning and individualization. *ELT Documents* 103. London: The British Council: 14-15.
- [4] Dickinson L. (1995). Autonomy and motivation: a literature review. *System*, 23(2): 165-174.
- [5] Dong Qi. & Yong. Zhou. (1994). On the Self Monitoring of Autonomous Learning. *The Academic Journal of Beijing Normal University*, (1): 8-14.
- [6] Du, Suqing. (2015). How to Cultivate the Ability of Autonomous Learning. *Administrative Evaluation*, (3): 19-20.
- [7] Holec H. (1981). *Autonomy and Foreign Learning*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- [8] Huang, Meihua. (2015). On the Autonomous Teaching Mode in Junior Middle School. *Scientific Research* (1): 7-8.
- [9] Hu, Nianhong. (2012). On the Cultivations of Junior School Students' Learning Habit. *English Education* (8): 52-53.
- [10] He, Xiaobo. (2009). The Group Learning of Junior Middle School Student. *Administrative Evaluation*, (9): 102-104.
- [11] He Dong. (2005). The Changes of Attitudes and Behaviors in Autonomous Learning. *Foreign Language Learning* (6): 47-54.
- [12] Little D. (1991). *Learner Autonomy Definitions, Issues and Problems*. Dublin: Authentic.
- [13] Jiang Hui. (2008). Exploration and Investigation of Group English Learning. *The Academic Journal of Jiangnan University* (4): 92-95.
- [14] Liu Runqing. (1999). *The Research Methods in Foreign Language Teaching*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- [15] Lin Yuqi. (1987). Establishing the Teaching Principles of Autonomous Learning. *The Higher Education Research* (2): 77-80.
- [16] Ministry of Education in People's Republic of China. (2011). *The National English curriculum standards of China*. Beijing: Press of Beijing Normal University.
- [17] Nunan D. (1995). Closing the gap between learning and instruction. *TESOL Quarterly* (6): 133-158.
- [18] Pang Guowei. (2001). On Students' Autonomous Learning. *The Academic Journal of East University of China* (2): 78-83.
- [19] Pang Guowei. (2003). *The Autonomous Learning—The Principles and Strategies of Teaching and Learning*. Shanghai: The Press of East University of China.
- [20] Ren Xiaohua. (2015). On the Cultivation of Students' Autonomous Learning on the Initiative Stage. *Foreign Language Teaching* (3): 52-53.
- [21] Schunk. D. H. (1989). Self-efficacy and achievement behaviors. *Educational Psychological Review* (5): 173-208.

- [22] Wen Qiufang. (1996). *On the English Learning Strategies*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- [23] Wenden A. (1998). *Learner strategies for learner autonomy*. Great Britain: Prentice Hall.
- [24] William M. & Burden R. (1997). *Psychology for Language Teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [25] Zimmerman B. J. (1989). A social cognitive view of self-regulated learning. *Journal of Educational Psychology*. (3): 329-339.
- [26] Zimmerman B. J. (1995). Self-regulation Involves More than Meta-cognition: A social cognitive perspective. *Educational Psychologist*: (30): 217-221.

Guobing Liu was born in Henan, China. He received the master's degree in corpus linguistics in 2005. Now he is an associated professor and EFL teacher at the Faculty of International Studies, Henan Normal University. He received the doctoral degree in corpus linguistics and computational linguistics in 2013. In recent years, he published two books and more than twenty academic papers in the key journals both home and abroad. His academic interests include corpus linguistics and foreign language teaching.