

Full Length Research Paper

Indicators of characteristics of Learners Autonomy in English Language of Primary 6 students in the Northeast of Thailand

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This study aims to develop indicators of characteristics of Learners Autonomy in English Language of Primary 6 students in the Northeast of Thailand. The researcher used a mixed research methodology. The samples were divided into 2 categories which are qualitative and quantitative samples. On qualitative sample, 7 experts in humanities and social were interviewed to assess the development of indicators of characteristics of Learners Autonomy in English Language of Primary 6 students. The interview showed that there were 7 components and 32 indicators for teachers with experience and expertise in teaching English in Primary 6. After that 11 expert teachers have a group discussion to discuss the indicators of characteristics of Learners Autonomy in English Language of Primary 6 students. The group discussion showed that there were 4 components and 13 indicators. On quantitative research, 600 students were selected for second order confirmatory factor analysis of Learners Autonomy in English Language of Primary 6 students in the Northeast of Thailand. The instruments used were interviews and questionnaires. Data analysis was done using mean, standard deviation and confirmations. For analysis of findings of qualitative research methodology on Learners Autonomy in English Language of Primary 6 Students, there were 4 components and 13 indicators in multi-case studies as follows: Component 1, How to study, 4 indicators; Component 2, Problem solving skills, 3 indicators; Component 3, Self-efficacy, 3 indicators; Component 4, Love to learn, 3 indicators. The second order confirmatory factor analysis found that the model was statistically significant, based on the statistically validated statistics of the model: χ^2 was 651.829, df was 601, p-value of 0.0741, CFI was 0.995, TLI was 0.994, RMSEA was 0.012, SRMR was 0.026, and χ^2/df was 1.085.

Key words: Indicators, the characteristics, Learners Autonomy in English Language.

INTRODUCTION

The main goal of the development of education in Thailand is to produce quality learners and to offer a

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learning process that is required for the growth of individuals and society. It is the knowledge of the environment, society, learning and support factors necessary for people to learn throughout life. The National Education Act (2010) is consistent with the principle of education under section 22 where educational management is based. In this section, students are considered and they are given opportunity to learn and develop themselves. Educational process must encourage students to develop naturally and to maximize their potential. The 21st century learning defines the vision of educational reform in the second decade (2009-2018). According to The Ministry of Education (2010), "Thai people have a lifelong learning in quality". The focus is on three reforms which are quality development, education and learning, and educational opportunities. The opportunity for Thai people is to have access to quality learning and to participate in all sectors of society. Students with learners autonomy are able to recognize, reason and understand the issues that arise so they can solve problems and be innovative about the change of society and be happy in their life (Dimitrios, 2015).

Learners autonomy is an important skill for students of today's age and for members of the society who are changing rapidly. Learners autonomy makes the students love to learn for the development of knowledge, self-development and always seek knowledge to keep up with the changes of their society. Guglielmino (1977) explains that, learners will have confidence in themselves, good foresight, love to learn, plan to learn, knowing how to learn, learning skills and solutions if they have learner's autonomy. Learner's autonomy enables students to have responsibility for their own learning and evaluation of learning. Whenever students have the learner autonomy, they love to study without anyone having to force them. It also stimulates endless curiosity which will lead to life-long learners, a goal that today's educators expect and desire to give to every person.

The New Cambridge Institute (Thailand) focuses on learner autonomy as the instructor. The students will have to work regularly to propel teachers to review lessons learned and practice outside the classroom. Learner Autonomy is a teaching system that is widely used in western countries. In contrast to the traditional Thai teaching, the instructor often puts all the information to the learner. Learner Autonomy helps students to understand English naturally by emphasizing the general behavior of the learner. When students are learning they first listen and understand, when they understand the students begin to speak, read and write, respectively (New Cambridge Institute (Thailand), 2017).

Before the development of the learners autonomy under the concepts and theories mentioned earlier, it requires a significant and necessary indicator to develop the learner autonomy in English language. Currently, there are no clear indicators of characteristics of learner's autonomy in English language of primary 6 students.

However, there are studies that indicate that there are many factors that affect the characteristics of learner autonomy in English language, such as research on current English teaching and learning situations. The study results in 3 dimensions: (1) Educational administrators (School Director) who contribute to the development of the learning environment; (2) Teachers and learners must have positive opinions and beliefs about the use of self-reliant learning methods; (3) Parents are involved in parenting to develop their independence in learning English (Nantiyah and Nuntida, 2016).

Based on the results of the National Basic Educational Testing (O-NET), Primary 6 of Academic in 2016, English language program had an average score of 34.59, with the lowest scores in the five subjects. When considering regional scores, the average score in the northeast region was 31.01 points, with the lowest scores from all regions (National Institute for Educational Testing Service, 2016) and the data show that the quality of learners is still at an unsatisfactory level. It is important to return to the source of the problem that the students do not have quality and low achievement.

Learner's autonomy in English language is essential for learning English for people of different ages, amidst so many changes. Everybody has problems that affect their lifestyles. Learner's autonomy is an important skill to solve these problems in various scenarios and to make learning most successful. Researches have not yet found a way to develop a person who is characterized as having a good learning autonomy; this is because there are many varieties of characteristics in the learner's autonomy in English language. The researcher, therefore, was interested in developing the indicators for developing the characteristics of learner's autonomy in English language of Primary 6 students in the Northeast of Thailand. The results of the analysis will be the guidelines for the parents, teachers and other stakeholders to produce graduates that respond to the changing world. Other educational institutions and the related organizations can also obtain important information that will give guidelines for the promotion and the development of characteristics of learner's autonomy in English language which affect the education and the development of the country.

This study is centered on development of indicators of the characteristics of Learners Autonomy in English language of Primary 6 students in the Northeast of Thailand. Due to wide and vast nature of schools and provinces in Thailand, the research was carried out in the Northeast part of Thailand.

Objectives

(1) To develop the indicators of the characteristics of Learners Autonomy in English language of Primary 6 students in the Northeast of Thailand.

(2) To examine the consistency of the model of the indicators of the characteristics of learners autonomy in English Language.

Population and sample

The population in this study is based on Primary 6 students in the Northeast of Thailand on the Basic Education Commission. There were two sample groups as follows: Interviews, the researcher carried out structured interviews with 7 experts on Learners Autonomy in English Language; Eleven teachers were used in group discussing the development of indicators of characteristics of Learners Autonomy in English Language of Primary 6 students. These consisted of expert teachers in humanities and social sciences whom the researcher engaged to discuss the indicators of characteristics of Learners Autonomy in English Language of Primary 6 students.

A total of 600 students from 10 provinces in the Northeast of Thailand were used for the second order confirmatory factor analysis for the development of indicators of the characteristics of Learners Autonomy in English Language of Primary 6 students. To determine the sample size used for the development of the indicators, the concept of determining the number of samples to develop and validate the model was employed.

Research instruments

- (1) Interviews with the experts on Learners Autonomy in English Language.
- (2) Group discussion with teachers on Learners Autonomy in English Language.
- (3) The questionnaire on the characteristics of Learners Autonomy in English Language of the indicators.

Finding quality of tools

- (1) The questionnaire of Learner Autonomy in English Language is based on the development of the indicator by the researcher in phase 1.
- (2) The researcher took the questionnaire to 7 experts interviewed to check the content for validity, relevance of the question, clarity of language and form of measurement.
- (3) Analyze the data of the correlation coefficient between the questions of the measurement and the terminology using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC). Select the question with IOC value from 0.5 to 1.00
- (4) The researcher carried out a pre-research test of the questionnaires by giving out 70 questionnaires to Primary 6 students at Anuban Chaiyaphum School. The

researcher wanted to assess the validity and applicability of the questionnaires before dispatching them to intended respondents. The researcher wanted also to test the reliability of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient and the discriminant power of the measure.

(5) Analyze the data and make a complete questionnaire to the experimental group from 600 students in 10 provinces of Northeast of Thailand.

These are tools or methods used to collect data. For the purpose of this research, the researcher used interviews and questionnaires. Highlighted research instruments are facts finding strategies employed during data collection.

Questionnaires

The researcher distributed 600 copies of questionnaires to selected students who participated in the study. The researcher targeted 10 provinces from the Northeast Thailand and 60 students from each province were selected to complete the questionnaires. The researcher gave the questionnaires to the students to which they completed on their own. The teacher in the school of experimental group assisted the researcher by collecting the completed questionnaires from the selected students.

Structured questionnaire

The researcher designed a structured questionnaire which is guided by Likert scale (Table 1). The researcher employed Likert scale due to its relevance in responding to structured questionnaires. Structured questionnaires were preferred in this research study as the researcher interacted with a large number of people and at the same time information had to be gathered within a specified period of time.

Interviews

The researcher carried out structured interviews with 7 experts on Learners Autonomy in English Language. This research relied on the knowledge and experiences of respondents in their participation on learner's autonomy. The researcher made an appointment with the 7 experts on the most convenient day and time to carry out a face to face interview.

Validity and reliability

The researcher considered that collected data is valid and reliable by taking into account the following values explained.

Table 1. Likert scale.

Detail	Strongly agree	Agree	Moderate	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Ratings	5	4	3	2	1

Validity

The researcher cross checked every questionnaire to ascertain that it was completed and instructions were adhered to. The content was further supported by interviews carried out with 7 expert teachers who were the representatives of each institute before making another inductive analysis to modify the variables of characteristics of the Learners Autonomy in English Language to be in consistency with the reality.

Reliability

The questionnaire of Learner Autonomy in English Language is based on the development of the indicator by the researcher in phase 1. The questionnaire was assessed by 7 experts who evaluated the content, relevance of the question, clarity of language and form of measurement. The researcher carried out a pre-research test of the questionnaires by giving out 70 questionnaires to Primary 6 students at Anuban Chaiyaphum School to check for validity and applicability. The researcher issued out 600 questionnaires and 90% of the questionnaires were correctly responded to. This article was written under the guidance and supervision of seasoned professors.

Ethical consideration

The researcher observed ethical considerations during data collection. Respondents were given freedom to respond to any questions in the manner they wanted. There was no undue influence in trying to persuade the respondents to answer the questionnaires in the way that is favorable to the researcher. The researcher emphasized that the respondents should not put their names on the questionnaires. All information collected during this research is purely for academic purposes and will be guarded with such integrity.

METHODOLOGY

Here, the methods and techniques that the researcher employed during data collection process were explained. It dwells on research design that the researcher implemented to provide valid and reliable information to research objectives formulated. The formulated research design enabled the researcher to collect relevant data and information in developing indicators of characteristics of Learners Autonomy in English Language of Primary 6 students in the Northeast of Thailand.

Research design

The researcher employed qualitative and quantitative research techniques in order to acquire sufficient information before giving a conclusion. According to Business Dictionary (2015), a research is a systematic investigation process employed to increase or revise current knowledge by discovering new ideas and facts. Webster (2015) postulated that a research is a studious inquiry aimed at uncovering new knowledge and ideas. The general view of research is therefore viewed as an investigation or a study that brings new information to the body of knowledge (Cresswell, 2009).

Qualitative research

Qualitative research methodology was used to generate the characteristics of Learners Autonomy in English Language of Primary 6 students in the Northeast of Thailand. Study theories, textbooks, academic literature, and related research papers relating to characteristics of Learners Autonomy in English Language, and the concepts of foreign academics before making the content analysis for drafting of variables of the development of indicators of Learners Autonomy in English Language before using them in the interviews for the opinions of 7 experts on education. The data were analyzed and summarized to create the variables of the Learners Autonomy in English Language.

To develop and modify variables of Learners Autonomy in English Language, the researcher contacted interviews with 7 teachers who were the representatives of each school before making another inductive analysis to modify the variables of characteristics of the Learners Autonomy in English Language to be in consistent with the reality. The researcher also made use of the group discussions, eleven teachers were used in discussing the development of indicators of characteristics of Learners Autonomy in English Language of Primary 6 students.

Quantitative

Due to inherent limitations of qualitative research method, the researcher also employed quantitative research to obtain numerical and statistical data. To collect quantitative data the researcher designed and employed structured questionnaires to gather statistical data pertaining to the objectives of the study. The data from 600 students in 10 provinces of Northeast of Thailand was collected. The students were given the questionnaires to which they completed on their own. The teacher in the school of experimental group collected the completed questionnaires to help the researcher. The researcher then examined the consistency of the model of the indicators of the characteristics of Learners Autonomy in English Language between the hypothetical assumptions and analyzed empirical data by second order confirmatory factor analysis using Mplus Program version 7.2.

RESULTS

Step1

The results of the development of the indicators of the

Table 2. The results of the development of the Learners Autonomy in English Language of primary 6 Students in the Northeast of Thailand.

No.	The indicators of the characteristics of the Learners Autonomy in English Language of Primary 6 students in the Northeast of Thailand
1	Students have a learning process
2	Students have to learn by using learning many resources
3	Students have the skills to research
4	Students know their advantages and limitations
5	Students have the skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing
6	Students can make decisions and solve problems
7	Students gather information in a variety of ways to solve problem
8	Students have positive self-opinions
9	Students have their own identity
10	Students are confident that they can learn
11	Students see the importance of learning
12	students have funny, happy enthusiasm for learning
13	Students appreciate who love learning

Learners Autonomy in English Language using qualitative research methodology by studying theories, textbooks, documents, research papers related to the characteristics of the Learners Autonomy in English Language, and 32 indicators were obtained.

Step2

The researcher drafted structured questions which were used for the interviews with 7 experts on education. The data was analyzed and summarized to create the variables of the characteristics of Learners Autonomy in English Language. In addition, the in-depth group discussions were done with 11 teachers who were the representatives of each school. The data was analyzed and summarized in order to adjust the variables of the characteristics of Learners Autonomy in English Language which were completely consistent with the actual situations. Subsequently, 13 indicators were obtained as shown in Table 2.

Step3

The consistency of the model of the measurement of the indicators of the characteristics of the Learners Autonomy in English Language of Primary 6 students in terms of hypothesis and the empirical data were verified by the second order confirmatory factor analysis using the Mplus Version 7.2 program. The results are discussed as the following.

From table 3, when the standardized factor loading (β) of the model was considered, all indicators were statistically significant at 0.01 level. Indicator with the highest factor loading was the third component: the

indicator L10 "Students are confident that they can learn" ($\beta = 0.999$); followed by the third component again, the indicator L9 "Students have their own identity" ($\beta = 0.998$); and the second component, the indicator L5 "Students have the skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing" ($\beta = 0.988$), respectively.

When the coefficient of determination (R^2) of all indicators was considered, it ranged from 0.006 to 0.651. The indicator with the highest coefficient of determination (R^2) was the third component: the indicator L10 "Students are confident that they can learn" ($R^2 = 0.998$); followed by the third component again, the indicator L9 "Students have their own identity" ($R^2 = 0.997$); and the first component, the indicator L5 "Students have the skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing" ($R^2 = 0.976$), respectively.

Form table 3, When the standardized factor loading (β) of the model was considered, all of the components were statistically significant at 0.01 level. The component with the highest factor loading was the third component which was self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.980$), followed by the fourth component which was love to learn ($\beta = 0.958$), the second components which was problem solving skills ($\beta = 0.955$), and the second components which was how to study skills ($\beta = 0.952$), respectively.

When the coefficient of determination (R^2) of all components was considered, it ranged from 0.006 to 0.651. The component with the highest coefficient of determination (R^2) was the third component: self-efficacy ($R^2 = 0.960$); followed by the fourth component, love to learn ($R^2 = 0.918$); the second component which was how to study the skills ($R^2 = 0.913$); and the first component, how to study skills ($R^2 = 0.906$), respectively.

From Table 4, the results of the second order confirmatory factor analysis of the characteristics of the

Table 3. The statistical results of the second order confirmatory factor analysis of the indicators of the characteristics of the Learners Autonomy in English Language of Primary 6 students.

Component	Indicator	Factor loading (b)	Standardized factor loading (β)	SE	Z	R ²
How to study	L1	1.000	0.941	0.028	33.577	0.886
	L2	1.312	0.877	0.026	33.879	0.769
	L3	1.455	0.963	0.019	51.730	0.928
	L4	1.441	0.916	0.023	40.049	0.839
Problem solving skills	L5	1.000	0.988	0.029	33.520	0.976
	L6	0.946	0.987	0.002	607.383	0.973
	L7	1.182	0.922	0.006	142.337	0.851
Self-efficacy	L8	1.000	0.984	0.017	58.292	0.968
	L9	1.011	0.998	0.024	42.188	0.997
	L10	1.049	0.999	0.000	4138.172	0.998
Love to learn	L11	1.000	0.903	0.021	43.834	0.815
	L12	1.051	0.982	0.018	53.352	0.964
	L13	0.885	0.950	0.022	43.454	0.903

Table 4. The statistical results of the second order confirmatory factor analysis of the components of the characteristics of Learners Autonomy in English Language of Primary 6 students.

Component	Factor loading (b)	Standardized factor loading (β)	SE	Z	R ²
How to study	1.000	0.952	0.011	88.893	0.906
Problem solving skills	1.500	0.955	0.010	98.093	0.913
Self-efficacy	1.581	0.980	0.011	89.594	0.960
Love to learn	1.616	0.958	0.012	81.914	0.918

Learners Autonomy in English Language of Primary 6 students revealed that the model had structural consistency. This can be considered from the statistical values used to verify the validity of the model as follows: $\chi^2=651.829$, $df = 601$, p -value = 0.0741, CFI = 0.995, TLI = 0.994, RMSEA = 0.012, SRMR = 0.026 and $d\chi^2/df = 1.085$ as shown in Figure 1 and Table 5.

It can be concluded that the model of standard measurement and the indicators of the Learners Autonomy in English Language of Primary 6 students. The order confirmatory factor analysis had structural consistency or was highly correlated with the empirical data. That is, all standards and indicators in the model were important standards and indicators and had relationships in supporting each other.

DISCUSSION

The results of the development of the indicators of the Learners Autonomy in English Language in the Northeast

of Thailand revealed 4 components and 13 indicators as follows: English learning of students by British Council (2013), Benson and Voller (1997), Wenden (1998), and Chatchapong (2009); the relevant research papers will discuss the results as components.

Component 1 (learning how to learn as followed by students)

Students have a learning process which uses learning resources, students have the skills to research and know their advantages and limitations. Wenden (1998), Dam (1990), Dickinson (1993), Sinclair (1997), and Gardner and Macintyre (1996) stated that students have access to learning strategies to reach their goals and reach their learning style. Dam (1990), Dickinson (1993), Sinclair (1997), and Gardner and MacIntyre (1996) agreed on Dickinson's characteristics of the learners autonomy in students. Students have the ability to understand what the teacher teaches, choose the appropriate learning

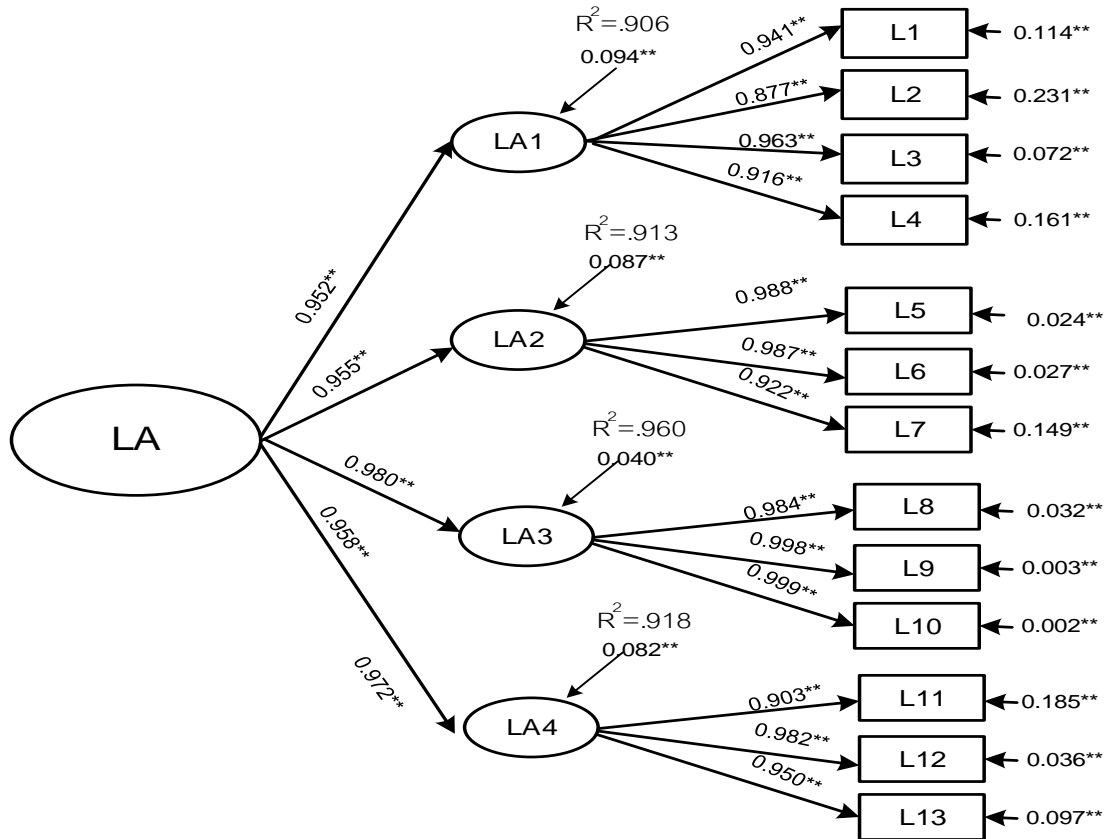


Figure 1. The verification of the model by second order confirmatory factor analysis of the characteristics of the Learners Autonomy in English Language of Primary 6 Students. $\chi^2=651.829$, $df = 601$, $p\text{-value} = 0.0741$, CFI = 0.995, TLI = 0.994, RMSEA = 0.012, SRMR = 0.026, $\chi^2/df = 1.085$.

Table 5. The statistic values used to verify the validity of the model by section order confirmatory factor analysis of the characteristics of Learners Autonomy In English Language of Primary 6 students.

Latent variable	χ^2	Df	χ^2/df	p-value	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
F	651.829	601	1.085	0.0741	0.995	0.994	0.012	0.026

strategies and can follow the results of strategies which can result in better learning (Dickinson, 1993). Gardner and MacIntyre (1996) highlighted that learner’s autonomy in English language enables students to initiate the learning plan by themselves and learners autonomy can be learned both in and out of the classroom (Sinclair, 1997).

Component 2 (Problem solving skills)

Problem solving skills is the component of learner autonomy in English language because learners autonomy in English language is an era that needs problem solving skills. These skills are listening, speaking, reading, and writing decision; in this regard students

make decisions and solve problems. Students can gather information in different ways to solve problems which is also in line with Guglielmino's features of ability to use skills, knowledge, and problem solving skills. Students have the ability to use basic skills in education, including listening, reading, writing, and remembering skills (Guglielmino, 1977). An important aspect of the learner is the freedom to learn and students can be corrected and have self-assessment (Dickinson, 1993).

Component 3 (Self-efficacy)

It is the component of the learner’s autonomy in English language because we are in an era that students have

positive self-opinions and they have their own identity. According to Guglielmino (1977), there is a strong sense of effective student learning, innovation and learners autonomy as students are confident that they can learn. Students have the responsibility for their own learning, good foresight and have creative thinking (Guglielmino, 1977). It is also in accordance with Benson and Voller (1997) learning autonomy feature, where self-directed learning is defined. Student can be self-taught in various situations. It is also in accordance with Sinclair (1997), who discusses the important aspects of being free to learn that a person is self-directed. Learners must be able to judge their own learning. Students have positive attitude towards responsibility to learn and intentions that can strengthen the learning. Students with learner's autonomy will have a high responsibility and can do anything or be the best (Sinclair, 1997).

Component 4 (Love to learn)

It is the component of the learners autonomy in English language because in this era students see the importance of learning. They have funny, enthusiasm for learning and appreciate the love to learn. It is also in accordance with Guglielmino (1977) who said that students love to learn, be enthusiastic about learning new things. In line with the feature of Benson and Voller's freedom of learning, there is an incentive to learn. In order for the learner's autonomy to be effective, students must love to learn and be able to learn from it. Anantasak discussed the important aspects of the learner's autonomy; the author highlighted that students must be ready and be willing to take responsibility for learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher developed the method using the mixed methodology, sequential equivalent design, which made the research more reliable and consistent with the feature of learner autonomy of Primary 6 students.

The results of this research were collected from students of 10 provinces in the Northeast of Thailand. The data collected by the school can be used to identify the characteristics of the students.

The indicator of learner autonomy developed by the researcher is 4 indicators. Each indicator was statistically significant at 0.01 and had the same weight. All of the indicators are important, so the researcher must focus on all the indicators.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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