CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSION

5. Evaluations of the Toolbox

The evolution of language learning and teaching is dynamic and stimulating in nature. The Toolbox presented in this study is a representation of current research and the state of second language learning and its efforts to foster learner autonomy. Over time, the tools will morph, develop, and improve, which is the nature of learning and learner autonomy.

The term "learner autonomy" can be found in most ESL/EFL literature published today. Therefore, the process of disseminating relevant, useful, applicable methods to include in the Toolbox proved challenging at times. The justifications for choosing one method over another one is not always transparent. In particular, in the self-access tools, there is no mention of a self-access center. This is in part because instituting a self-access center involves more than just the classroom teacher. There are lots of resources needed and support from the institution is crucial. There are however materials available that were discovered after the selection process that teachers and students can easily implement on their own. Sheerin's (1989) "Self-Access" resource book provides materials that students can access, work with, and check the answers on their own, without any teacher involvement. This shows that there are ways to adapt materials to work in any context. Through this study, flexibility was revealed as one of the key elements needed in trying new methods.

The advantages of this study are that teachers have countless ideas of how to foster learner autonomy in their classrooms. They can experiment with and conduct research on tools that work best for them and their students. The practice model presented here guides and introduces teachers to realistic modes of implementation.

5.1 Implications of utilizing the Toolbox in a Thai University

In current second language teaching literature the terms "learner autonomy", "learner responsibility", "self-awareness" are highly recommended as educational goals for learners. Learning and responsibility are synonymous. Thailand is slowly working towards an educational context that includes such ideals, but needs clear direction and realistic materials for implementation. Some universities have risen to the challenge and are currently employing a more communicative-based methodology in the classroom and outside. In particular, Chulalongkorn University boasts a self-access learning laboratory and "A Hybrid (Blended) Network Technology Enhanced Language Learning Model" that can be accessed online. It provides activities and tasks and inter-intracommunication in which students can experiment, evaluate and reflect on the material presented. Chulalongkorn University is one of the most prestigious universities in Thailand and has an excellent reputation, highly-qualified professors/teachers, research grants, and remains a status symbol to all other universities nationwide. However, the average university in Thailand does not have the same resources or knowledge base and therefore a different approach is called for.

The Toolbox offers all universities an on-going resource pool that is economically viable and accessible. The approaches range in adaptability and

implementation which results in tools for all teachers regardless of their experience. The one requirement needed to utilize the Toolbox is willingness. The initiative to implement resources from the Toolbox into courses has to come from the teachers. The resources are available and it is up to the teacher to take charge and start the transformation, and yet they are not alone in this decision. If the goal is truly to follow the National educational guidelines, the university administration needs to provide support, dictate realistic objectives and offer resources to apply such as those in the Toolbox. The more unified the stakeholders are in the process of developing an environment that fosters learner autonomy equilaterally in all English classrooms at the university, the louder the message will be to the students that it is an essential goal in the learning process.

The effectiveness of the tools at the classroom level will ultimately rely on the readiness of the teacher to implement change and the receptiveness of the learners to keep an open minded attitude.

5.2 Further Research with the Toolbox

As there has been no in-class research of the tools utilized in a real setting, there are numerous ways in which future research projects can be conducted. Research can be done in the following areas:

- Trial the Blueprint with university teachers and modify accordingly
- Expand on the conceptual framework in the Blueprint to include further/different contextual considerations
- Follow one tool from the start to end of course recording teacher/student reactions

- Survey which tools are most user-friendly for the teacher and or student with questionnaires, diaries, or interviews

- Record advantages/disadvantages of any tools used in a class

- Conduct in-class research about learners' attitudes towards the tools

- Follow the model in this case study and record teacher/student experiences

- Design specific activity types to support a tool/s

- Distribute Chapter 4 to Yonok English 202 teachers and invite them to experiment with the specific tools/activities provided in the case study

- Track the learners development towards learner autonomy from the beginning to the end of the course through surveys/questionnaires

- Expand, modify, and add new approaches to the Toolbox

Classroom teachers that want to experiment with any of these suggested research projects will benefit from this view of research:

> Research is not primarily a process of proving something, but a process of discovery and learning. This view of research allows classroom teachers to take seriously the ordinary business of their lives as teachers.
> (Ray as cited in Freeman 1996:88)

Like the fostering of learner autonomy, the journey in this study is about discovery and is therefore a never-ending process. The foundation and groundwork have been laid through the design of the Toolbox and there is much additional building to be done. Through research, much can be discovered about the effectiveness of the tools with regards to teacher and learner development. New approaches in second language teaching will be introduced over time that can be added to the Toolbox and the significance and benefits stated here will truly emerge.