Student Perception of Language Achievement and Learner Autonomy in a Blended Korean Language Course: The Case Study of Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center

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AHN, MISOOK

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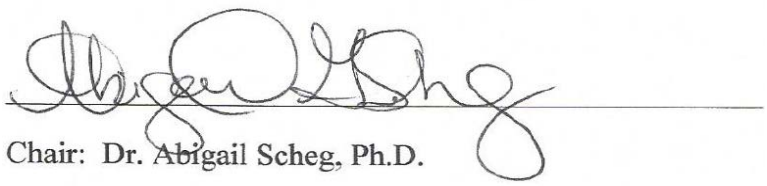
AHN, MISOOK

Approved by:



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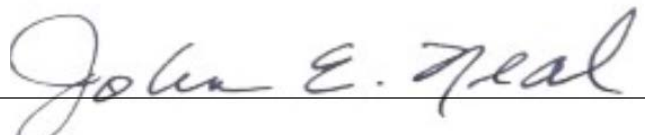
Certified by:



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Abstract

The blended learning model, which combines the traditional face-to-face learning method with an online application such as a learning management system (LMS), became popular and more practical for both teachers and learners in foreign and second language education because of its effective methodology for course delivery and socialization opportunities with technology-enhanced learning activities in both online and offline environments. Although the effectiveness of blended language learning models and benefits of student achievement and autonomous learning with an LMS have been explored, prior research resulted in conflicting data on blended instruction identifying the inconsistent findings in student achievement. Some researchers found that students in blended learning improved their language skills and had higher achievement than participants in exclusively face-to-face or online learning, while some researchers found there to be no statistically important differences in achievement when the blended model was used compared to a face-to-face setting. The specific problem is that the low language achievement of students seems to be related to lack of autonomous language learning skills, but their perceptions of the blended language courses regarding language achievement and autonomous learning skill have not been previously identified and analyzed. The purpose of this qualitative case study is to investigate student perceptions of course effectiveness factors for language proficiency as well as learner autonomy in a blended Korean language course to improve language achievement, especially in listening and reading comprehension skills. American students who attended intermediate and advanced blended Korean language courses applied with the LMS, *SAKAI* in 2014, 2015, and 2016 at the Osan Language Training Detachment (LTD), Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC) in Korea, were invited to participate in the anonymous, open-ended online survey. Data from 10 of the participants were analyzed and

evaluated. This study found the blended Korean language course was effective for language learning and achievement, but only 50% of participants stated it was effective for the improvement of autonomous learning skills. The other responses said those skills were dependent on various elements of the blended course such as activities, curriculum, teacher, and student's motivation and learning styles. The factors students found to be effective and ineffective as well as suggestions offered to improve the blended language course were discussed. Although the focus was on one Osan LTD teaching Korean language courses at DLIFLC, the findings could be able to improve language achievement and autonomous learning for future learner success as well as curriculum design in other foreign language courses in DLIFLC or other institutions.

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Finally, I would like to congratulate myself for not giving up in pursuit of my Doctoral degree even times of personal hardship. I want to say to myself, “You did a great job and you finally did it!”

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Chapter 1: Introduction

As colleges and universities have started offering more online educational opportunities, blended learning is one of the most important recent advances and has become well known in foreign language education (Grgurovic, 2011; Ting & Chao, 2013). Blended learning, which combines the traditional face-to-face learning method with an online application, became popular and more practical for both teachers and learners because of its effective methodology for course delivery (Owston, York, & Murtha, 2013; Thang et al., 2013; Wu & Liu, 2013). To supplement the advantages of face-to-face classroom instruction, a learning management system (LMS), the platform for online content and courses, has been used to assist course management, and has provided students with various benefits such as learning effectiveness, social interaction, autonomous learning, and access to knowledge and information (Grgurovic, 2011; Juhary, 2013; Ting & Chao, 2013; Wu & Liu, 2013).

Recent research related to blended foreign language education found out that both teachers and students reported positive attitudes towards the blended approach, and that blended learning was useful for students in language learning (Lee & Lee, 2013; Thang et al., 2013; Wu & Liu, 2013). Also, in a blended learning environment, students' satisfaction and learning achievements appeared to be higher than in either fully face-to-face or online classes (Owston et al., 2013; Ryan, Kaufman, Greenhouse, She, & Shi, 2016). The reasons include the benefit that blended learning helps students concentrate on realizing academic objectives by using the appropriate learning skills for each student (Ting & Chao, 2013; Wu & Liu, 2013). Therefore, as policy makers and course developers face decisions about how to design an effective foreign language curriculum,

blended instruction has been recommended to enhance student learning experiences and course achievement (Owston et al., 2013). Consequently, in 2012 Osan Language Training Detachment (LTD), of the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC), developed and implemented a blended Korean language course which combined traditional face-to-face learning with the LMS, *SAKAI*.

As shown by recent studies regarding English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' perceptions of the blended learning environment, students noted gains in overall reading comprehension and oral proficiency, to include pronunciation and lexical accuracy (Behjat, Yamini, & Bagheri, 2012; Chen, 2015). However, little is known about the factors that affect students' language learning outcomes with blended learning, especially in other foreign languages (Wu & Liu, 2013). Accordingly, this research attempted to initiate an in-depth and comprehensive study about students' perception of language achievement and autonomous learning from a blended Korean language course as well as the effectiveness factors to improve a foreign language curriculum and student success.

Background

The blended learning model has been widely employed in foreign and second language education due to its effectiveness and socialization opportunities with technology-enhanced learning activities in both online and offline environments (Thang et al., 2013). Before blended instruction was adapted to traditional Korean language classrooms in Osan LTD, DLIFLC, students had to download their daily listening and reading activities and homework onto a USB drive or classroom computer. They also had to review their homework as a group without the opportunity to receive the instructor's

individual feedback. Not only was course delivery less efficient, but student feedback was less convenient and flexible as well. For effective course delivery and the improvement of teaching and learning, in 2012, the *SAKAI*, LMS, was added to the traditional classroom teaching to help students access course information and materials as well as enhance their language achievement (Ja'ashan, 2015; Jane & Tanya, 2010). Students' different learning styles and perceptions lead to serve individual student's needs, and the lessons with *SAKAI* are used to support traditional types of learning (Banditvilai, 2016).

In the blended Korean language learning environment, through the *SAKAI*, LMS, instructors would be actively involved in uploading course information, materials, assignments, vocabulary lists, and tests (Juhary, 2013). They could also provide students with constant feedback on their assignments, tasks, and test results. Additionally, students could access course information and materials anywhere and anytime as well as communicate with their peers and instructors regarding feedback and tasks both online and offline (Kaur & Sidhu, 2010; Wichadee, 2014). However, the blended language instruction in Osan LTD requires students to have autonomous learning skills and to take responsibility for their own learning.

According to Jane and Tanya (2010), the high level of involvement with an LMS of students and instructors during their course will positively influence the students' satisfaction with the LMS while increasing their level of comfort with and benefits gained from its use. Although the quality of teaching and learning with an LMS has improved in Osan LTD, benefits of an LMS such as students' language achievement and autonomous learning were not investigated. Therefore, in this study, students'

perceptions towards blended learning with an LMS and effective factors for student learning outcomes including language achievement and autonomous learning were explored.

Statement of the Problem

As the number of blended classes is increasing, the effectiveness of these models and the benefits of student achievement and autonomous learning with an LMS have been explored but with conflicting results. Some researchers found that those who participated in blended learning improved their language skills and had higher achievement than participants in exclusively face-to-face or online learning (e.g., Bueno-Alastuey & López Pérez, 2014; Isiguzel, 2014; Lee & Lee, 2013). On the other hand, some researchers found there to be no statistically important differences in achievement when the blended model was used in a face-to-face setting (e.g., Ja'ashan, 2015; Owston et al., 2013).

Since blended Korean language instruction using *SAKAI,* LMS was implemented at the Osan LTD, DLIFLC, students have successfully increased their overall language proficiency. However, the percentage of students that achieve Level 2 to Level 2+ in listening and reading skills on the Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT) has been steadily decreasing, while the percentage of Level 3 or higher students is increasing. The specific problem to be addressed is that the low language achievement of students who have under Level 3 in listening and reading skills seems to be related to lack of autonomous language learning skills because they show the same attitude, competency, and learning behavior issues (Tassinari, 2012). This highlights the need to study students' perceptions on the blended Korean language courses regarding language achievement and

autonomous learning skill which has not been previously identified. With the growing market of blended education and the desire to design effective blended language courses, knowledge acquired from this study will enable instructors to more effectively plan curricula and increase student success and autonomous learning skills through blended instruction (Ja'ashan, 2015; Ryan et al.,2016).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate student perceptions of course effectiveness factors for language proficiency as well as learner autonomy in a blended Korean language course to improve language achievement, especially in listening and reading comprehension skills. The anonymous survey was conducted online using Survey Monkey, and the questionnaire included two parts: biographic information and blended language experiences. American students who attended intermediate and advanced blended Korean language courses applied with the LMS, *SAKAI* in 2014, 2015, and 2016 at the Osan LTD, DLIFLC in Korea, were invited to participate in the survey via personal email. This study is considered a phenomenological and exploratory case study because the researcher explored the participants' unique perceptions of their learning experiences in the blended Korean language courses. Themes regarding the phenomenon to be studied, which were student perception on language achievement and autonomous learning, were analyzed and compared. Thematic categories and patterns of responses were interpreted and reported in Chapters 4 and 5 of this manuscript.

Research Questions

Prior research resulted in conflicting data on blended instruction identifying the inconsistent findings in student achievement (Ryan et al., 2016). Therefore, in this

phenomenological case study, contributive success factors of language achievement which students perceived were investigated to develop necessary implementation strategies for a blended language learning curriculum. The anonymous, open-ended survey was conducted online using Survey Monkey. By finding answers to the following questions, detracting methods were able to be removed, and focus was shifted to each student's trouble areas. The questions sought to explore how students perceive the improvement of language skills and autonomous language learning in a blended Korean language course compared to a face-to-face course, what factors students perceive improve or hinder their language skills and autonomous learning skills in a blended Korean language course, and how to develop more effective blended language curriculum for student success. The following research questions guided this research.

Q1. How do students perceive the effectiveness of language achievement in especially listening and reading skill in a blended Korean language course which is combined face-to-face class with *SAKAI*, learning management system (LMS)?

Q2. What factors do students perceive improve or hinder their listening and reading skills in a blended Korean language course?

Q3. How do students perceive the improvement of autonomous learning skills in a blended Korean language course?

Q4. What factors do students perceive improve or hinder their autonomous learning skills in a blended Korean language course?

Q5. How do students perceive the effective blended language curriculum for student success?

In addition to the primary research questions, students were asked about course challenges and concerns, as well as for suggestions with the purpose to increase blended language course effectiveness and learner success.

Nature of the Study

The phenomena of students' perceptions of language achievement and autonomous learning in a blended Korean language course at the participating college were explored during this qualitative study. The goal of this study was to verify perceived factors that may increase or decrease course effectiveness, especially in language achievement and autonomous learning. This study is considered phenomenological because each participant shared his or her own perceptions of effectiveness in language achievement and autonomous learning in a blended Korean language course. Data was collected via an open-ended online survey. The survey questionnaire can be found in Appendix A of this manuscript. The collected data was categorized and labeled with common themes in a separate table. Insights into inconsistent data existing in literature review were discussed in this study.

The objectives for this study include: (a) reviewing existing blended language learning research through a literature review to expand additional theoretical knowledge; (b) conducting an anonymous online survey regarding the student perception of blended Korean language courses at the Osan LTD, DLIFLC; (c) collecting, categorizing, and comparing the perceived course effectiveness factors by the students taking blended Korean language courses; (d) identifying any gaps between the students' perceptions and current literature in the area of blended language instruction regarding language achievement and autonomous learning.

The following stakeholders may be interested in or affected by the results of the study: (a) current and future students taking blended Korean language courses, (b) faculty teaching blended Korean language courses at the Osan LTD or DLIFLC, and (c) other faculty teaching blended foreign languages. Although the focus is on one Osan LTD teaching Korean language course at DLIFLC, the findings will be able to improve language achievement and autonomous learning for future learner success as well as curriculum design in other foreign language courses in DLIFLC or other institutions.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study was to determine perceptions of students regarding language achievement and autonomous learning in blended Korean language courses as well as the relevant factors that may increase or decrease student success and course effectiveness. Secondarily, the significance was to provide faculty with best practices and potential strategies for learner success. This case study will contribute to improving blended foreign language education by understanding the student perceptions of blended language learning.

Definition of Key Terms

Autonomous learning (Learner Autonomy). Autonomous learning is the ability to take charge of one's own learning as well as to initiate, monitor, and evaluate learning process (Dang & Robertson, 2010).

Blended learning (BL). Blended learning is the integration of the traditional face-to-face learning method and online learning to promote active, self-directed learning opportunities with flexibility (Grgurovic, 2011; Owston et al., 2013; Thang, Mustaffa,

Wong, Noor, Mahmud, Latif, & Aziz, 2013; Ting & Chao, 2013; Wichadee, 2014**;** Wu & Liu, 2013). Also, known as hybrid learning.

Blended Learning Environment (BLE). Blended learning environment is an environment which takes place in a face-to-face setting (Lopes, 2009) in conjunction with online learning (Grgurovic, 2011).

Computer Mediated Communication (CMC). Computer Mediated Communication is the interaction between learners and technology (Dang & Robertson, 2010).

Learning Management System (LMS). Learning management system is a software system designed for teaching and learning and includes various tools for course content organization, communication, assessment, gradebook, and management of materials and activities (Lopes, 2009). *Blackboard, WebCT, Moodle, LAMS, and SAKAI* are similar variations of LMSs (Harrington et al., 2006), and it is also known as Course Management System (CMS) or Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) (Lopes, 2009).

Metacognition. Metacognition is defined as thinking about one's own thinking, an awareness of one's thought processes, learning how to learn, or self-regulated learning (Shamir, 2013).

Scaffolding. Scaffolding is a mediator which provides external support from the instructor, peers, experts, or tools to help learners construct their knowledge (Schwieter, 2010)

Ubiquitous computing environment. Ubiquitous computing environment means a widespread portable networked technology environment. In this environment, learners

and teachers can access computing technology whenever and wherever they need (Hill, Reeves, & Heidemeier, 2000).

Summary

The study was designed to verify perceptions of students regarding language achievement and autonomous learning in blended Korean language courses and to discover the effectiveness factors that may improve learner success and blended language curriculum. A qualitative method approach was used to explore the case study environment by surveying American students who took blended Korean language courses at the Osan LTD, Korea. The questionnaires were administered online using Survey Monkey. The collected data was categorized and analyzed to suggest best practices and strategies to contribute to enhancing student learning outcomes and course effectiveness.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The primary purpose of this proposed qualitative study was to identify the effectiveness factors and challenges of language achievement and autonomous learning perceived by students taking a blended Korean language course, and then recognize a strategic approach in developing blended courses that can promote student success in higher foreign language education, specifically at the Osan LTD, DLIFLC. The goal of this literature review was to explore existing information on learning theory and blended language learning models with technology tools to gain further theoretical knowledge at the university level in foreign language education.

The ubiquitous computing environment has altered student learning by making it easier to stay connected and to access resources. The more that higher education offers online distance learning or blended learning courses, the more universally available tools such as LMSs will be that enable students and teachers to enhance learning and teaching with great efficacy. Also, in the blended learning environment, roles change: teachers become online tutors and students more autonomous learners (Grgurovic, 2011). In order to evaluate blended learning effectively, this literature review is presented in six parts consisting of learning theory, ubiquitous computing environment and online learning, background of blended learning, Learning Management System, language achievement and learner autonomy in a blended learning environment, and benefits and challenges of blended learning. The literature review provides a context to understand the phenomenon of blended learning with technology in higher foreign language education.

Documentation

The primary literature sources were collected from the databases through Northcentral University's online library, such as ERIC, ProQuest, EBSCO, and SAGE publications. The roadrunner search tool with advanced search helped to find peer-reviewed, scholarly sources and full text conveniently. In addition, textbooks from NCU courses were also reviewed for references.

Learning Theory for Blended Learning

Sociocultural theory, constructivist theory, and metacognition theory provide a theoretical framework to inform this research because these theories share common characteristics, such as interaction, collaboration, constructive knowledge, Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), scaffolding, as well as learner centered and authentic learning. The common ground of the three theories is based on Lev Vygotsky's ZPD theory, which emphasizes social interaction and collaboration between the novice and expert learner through scaffolding for the learners' cognitive development (Schwieter, 2010; Shamir, 2013). According to Vygotsky's theory, students are not independent from their learning context, and their learning is influenced through their ZPD (Bashir-Ali, 2011). Vygotsky defined the ZPD as the distance between the actual developmental level and the level of potential development, and he emphasized communication and shared action in origin and cognitive language learning (Brook, 2013).

Sociocultural theory suggests that for a learner's intellectual growth and knowledge acquisition, social interaction and collaboration between the novice and expert learner should occur within the novice learners' ZPD, and continuous negotiation between teacher and student should be involved in all teaching and learning activities (Shamir, 2013). The social interaction and collaboration is facilitated via scaffolding,

which is a mediator providing external support from the instructor, peers, experts, or tools to help learners construct their knowledge (Schwieter, 2010). According to Vygotsky, collaboration, modeling, scaffolding and peer support lead to cognitive development which is associated with higher order thinking (Bashir-Ali, 2011).

A modeling example, which is based on the Bandura's social learning theory, is another important mediator in learning (Van Gog & Rummel, 2010). It asserts that learners can enhance their understanding by practicing the behavior through the observation of modeling examples. However, modeled behavior with too complex or too subtle aspects may cause some difficulty to novice learners because the modeling relies on their prior knowledge. In addition, making students practice the behavior between observations of modeling examples may improve learning by helping them be aware of deficiencies in their own performance and increase their attention in a future observation of a model's performance.

With the ubiquitousness of computing environments allowing students and instructors to interact with each other on the web or mobile community, computer mediated communication (CMC) has been an area of focus for research, which involves the interactions between learners and technology in conjunction with the sociocultural perspective rather than a purely technological perspective (Dang & Robertson, 2010). Particularly, CMC has been found to increase not only students' linguistic development but also their success in using the target language through negotiations, collaborations, interactions and communications. Therefore, sociocultural theory allows for this research to investigate the influence of blended learning with online technology, such as a

Learning Management System, which involves social participation and interaction through online discussion tools such as chatting rooms and emails.

Constructivist theory is based upon foundational ideas of the sociocultural theory, which emphasizes social interaction and collaboration (Schwieter, 2010). Constructivist theory is based on mechanisms that learners should internalize knowledge taken from their own experiences and emphasizes authentic learning and a learner-centered focus for teaching and learning (Li, 2012). This theory helps instructors create learner-centered and collaborative environments because it encourages students to control their own learning, use critical thinking skills for problem solving, as well as construct new knowledge based on their previous experiences. Therefore, for a constructive teaching method, teachers need to provide learners with real-world and case-based settings for meaningful and authentic knowledge, apply active learning, which involves learning by doing and a more student-centered focus rather than teacher-centered. Most of all, teachers should provide students with instruction for how to construct new knowledge and a better learning environment as well as be aware of what areas promote students' experiences for growth (Pogany, 2009). In addition, constructivist theory suggests that instructors should teach learners how to manage, analyze, critique, and transform information into valuable knowledge in order to help them become active and self-regulated learners (Schwieter, 2010).

Both constructivist theory and sociocultural theory are concerned with learning activities, but constructivist theory emphasizes the attention to learning and mental representation of the individual, while social theory emphasizes the ways of learning within enculturation. Therefore, when applying learning activities to the class, instructors

have to consider the characteristics of constructivist theory and sociocultural theory in order to have a well-rounded impact on instruction.

Interaction using technologies such as an LMS allows for instructors to provide a way to motivate and stimulate learners by applying authentic materials and student-centered activities through an online interface as well as a means for instructors to create a collaborative learning environment through peer and teacher interaction (Pogany, 2009). In a well-planned online multimedia curriculum, students can not only practice constructivist learning by having access to the authentic materials and interacting with the instructors and other students but also improve learner autonomy by learning how to study (Li, 2012).

Learning how to study means being able to learn independently and become a self-reflective learner (Kaur & Kaur Sidhu, 2010). Learner autonomy is a powerful tool to promote a learner's successful attainment of knowledge (Shamir, 2013). It is an ability to accept responsibility for one's own learning as well as to initiate, monitor, and evaluate learning processes (Dang & Robertson, 2010). According to Kaur and Kaur Sidhu (2010), autonomous learners enthusiastically look for new knowledge and frequently engage with the cognitive, metacognitive, affective and social dimensions of the learning process. There are two kinds of autonomous learners: proactive autonomous learners actively taking control of their own learning, and reactive autonomous learners being pushed towards various forms of independent learning. In order to promote learner autonomy, students need self-regulated learning skills (Nakata, 2014).

Self-regulated learning consists of three general aspects of academic learning: behavior, motivation and cognition (Ting & Chao, 2013). The ability to regulate one's

own learning is the key to successful learning in school and beyond, but this ability depends on the learner's participation in the learning process. Therefore, in order to become self-regulated, learners should be aware of their own processes. The most effective learners are conscious of their learning and have high metacognitive processes (Joyce, Weil & Calhoun, 2008). Students with metacognitive awareness can decide their own learning strategies and resources as well as review their progress, accomplishments and future learning directions (Brook, 2013). Most of all, for the promotion of learner autonomy, teacher autonomy is important because teachers who want to promote learners' autonomy must themselves be autonomous in their professional skills and employing practices for learner autonomy (Nakata, 2014).

Metacognitive awareness is the awareness of what an individual does or doesn't know (Unal, 2010). Metacognition is also defined as thinking about one's own thinking, an awareness of one's thought processes, learning how to learn, or self-regulated learning (Shamir, 2013). Ting and Chao (2013) described metacognitive strategy as the ability to monitor and adjust the reasoning and cognitive processes. In second language learning, metacognition is also defined as the knowledge of the learner's learning styles and preferences (Brook, 2013). Metacognition enables students to think, study, and concentrate in order to attain educational success (Unal, 2010). It is also related to the goals of the student so that the learners' mastery goals can lead to academic success by means of metacognition.

Metacognition theory is closely related to constructivist theory because learners have to be conscious of and monitor their own thinking in order to construct knowledge (Joyce et al., 2008). Learners who have high-level metacognitive processes can become

self-regulated learners. Self-regulation is powerful because it can promote learners' successful knowledge acquisition. Therefore, helping students construct their knowledge is essential for metacognitive development. Moreover, metacognition is based on Vygotsky's theory, which focuses on the interaction among people for cognitive development (Schwieter, 2010; Shamir, 2013). Direct instruction or collaboration with a mediator such as computers, teachers, and peers can guide students on how to connect previous experiences with new knowledge. In other words, designing curriculum and teaching with technology, such as an LMS, in conjunction with scaffolding will enhance metacognition skills because scaffolding can reduce the ZPD between the actual level and the potential level.

For the development of metacognition, learners should practice monitoring, planning, organizing, controlling, and evaluating their learning (Unal, 2010). For the development of learner autonomy, students are encouraged to determine the objectives, define the content and progression, select methods and techniques to be used, monitor the procedures of acquisition, and evaluate what has been acquired (Balcikanli, 2010). Through this process, autonomous learners can set up directions in the planning, pacing, monitoring and evaluation of the learning process

Most of all, in order to help students develop their metacognitive control and become self-regulated learners, instruction plays an important role. Instructors should help them monitor, plan, organize, control, and evaluate the learning process (Unal, 2010). Especially for students who have low-level metacognitive strategies, some guidance and directory counseling should be provided through meetings, conferences, or seminars so that there can be more guided support to achieve educational success. Peer

tutoring and reflexivity are also recommended to enhance metacognitive strategies. In summary, autonomous constructivist teachers should promote the constructive and autonomous learning classroom environment, as teachers who are not autonomous language learners may negatively impact the development of learner autonomy. However, metacognitive strategies emphasize effective roles from both instruction and the individualization of the education (Unal, 2010).

The most crucial factor for the development of metacognition and self-regulation is learners' autonomy because those who have strong autonomy have taken responsibility of their own learning and possess the ability to initiate, monitor, and evaluate learning processes (Dang & Robertson, 2010). Learners should know how to construct their own knowledge as well as develop their metacognitive strategies for the attainment of successful learning. Therefore, the goal of curriculum and teaching should focus on enhancing the students' abilities to be independent and self-regulated learners as well as assisting students to become aware of themselves and of their learning environment (Unal, 2010). Learning environments which include social interaction, collaboration, and scaffolding are crucial to enhance student learning. However, it is important that instructors help students become self-regulated and responsible for their learning while encouraging autonomy so that there is support when needed.

In this high technology era, many institutions have provided various curriculum integrated technologies into education, such as online courses or blended learning courses which consist of traditional methods of learning in conjunction with online learning (Grgurovic, 2011). Teaching with technology can foster student learning by providing a social network, collaborative activities, and communication between learners and

instructors. These aspects help learners construct their knowledge in a social context and become self-regulated by monitoring and evaluating their learning. However, for the fulfillment of effective and successful learning, the roles of instructors and learners are critical. If learners do not have intrinsic motivation and metacognitive strategies, they will neither construct their own knowledge nor become autonomous learners. Also, if instructors do not develop their own metacognition for instruction, they will not be aware of their teaching pedagogies and cannot provide students with effective modeling examples and learning environments.

In conclusion, a theoretical lens frame work of blended learning with technology including sociocultural theory, constructivist theory, and metacognition theory not only increases the awareness of applicable notions and principles but also offers insight to the field of education in the ubiquitous computing environment. The three theories are interrelated, and the common final goal of the theories is to enhance the learners' cognitive development and autonomy by providing social interaction and collaboration with scaffolding. Accordingly, the gap between the learner's actual level and the potential level in ZPD will be reduced when students construct their own knowledge based upon prior experiences and practice modeling examples in an authentic and social context. Learners' metacognitive strategies will also help them become self-regulated learners. Instructors play an important role in developing the learners' metacognition in addition to providing a socially interactive, collaborative, and learner-centered environment. Most of all, both instructors and learners need to be aware of their own teaching and learning in order to improve the attainment of education from both sides.

Consequently, although many theories suggest methods for instructors and learners needed to be successful, it is very difficult for them to adapt the theories to actual practice for teaching and learning, because both instructors and students persist in practicing their own teaching and learning styles which have been deeply ingrained. However, theories can guide instructors and students to be aware of their methods and evaluate areas for improvement. Therefore, this research based on the three theories allows for investigating into how blended learning with an LMS influences students' language achievement and autonomous learning through learner-centered and collaborative environments as well as authentic materials and interaction with instructors and peers.

Ubiquitous Computing Environment and Online Learning

Ubiquitous computing environment has altered student learning by adding value beyond just academic results, supporting the development of the whole student. Technology can improve the authentic learning experience and move classrooms from an isolated environment to the world (Leone & Leo, 2011). In a ubiquitous learning environment, the traditional classroom has been transformed into an online class, and the use of technology in online courses has improved student learning and interaction between students and with teachers anytime and anywhere (Garcia-Sanchez, 2016). Expanded use of the internet allows both students and teachers to access to information easily (Pogany, 2009). Also, student-centered teaching, constructivist teaching practices, and project- and inquiry-based lessons have risen with the increased availability of computers. Positive increases in relation to student skills, motivation, engagement, school attendance, organizational skills, and collaborative skills have been documented as well.

Students in a technologically ubiquitous learning environment had a more positive attitude towards electronic educational interaction than did their counterparts who did not. The biggest advance stemming from ubiquitous computing is in communication and community building. Communication through e-mails, in particular, became a very powerful benefit for professors and students in this environment.

In the case studies of Kratcoski, Swan, and Campbell (2006), the ubiquitous computing environment appeared to impact teaching and learning with regard to not only the types of external representations used by the teachers and students, but also students' internal conceptualizations underlying the representations. In these classes, the teachers provided more authentic learning experiences for their students and linked them to experts and resources that extended beyond their regular classroom curriculum. The ubiquitous learning environment gave students more opportunities to create, analyze, synthesize, and share information in new ways, leading to a deep understanding of key concepts and information. Using digital technologies, students were more motivated, engaged, and able to represent their knowledge and understanding in a variety of forms. In other words, ubiquitous technologies can provide both teachers and students new ways of constructing, representing and sharing knowledge.

In addition, ubiquitous computing allows for the adaptation of digital tools to broaden knowledge and the use of online resources such as various databases in order to change the way students learn and concentrate on higher-level thinking (Pogany, 2009). In such an environment, students are able to perform higher-ordered, more complex intellectual tasks because they routinely used computers (Brown and Petitto, 2003). Therefore, Garcia-Sanchez (2016) suggests an online course should include

metacognitive activities combined with metacognitive abilities because distance learners are required to have conscious independent thinking skills and autonomous abilities to solve problems. Metacognitive activities can help learners achieve cognitive and communicative goals by actively involving learners' participation and teachers' monitoring.

In summary of the reasons mentioned thus far, online learning has become the fastest and most attractive growing trend in higher education due to cost efficiency as well as flexible access to content and instruction at any time and from any place (Means et al., 2013; Ryan et al., 2016). However, for learner success, it is important to note that the quality of online learning is critical, and should be equal to or better than that of traditional face-to-face classroom learning experience (Bigatel et al., 2012). According to Banditvilai (2016), many researchers have found that online learning has affected teaching methodology and pedagogy as well as enhanced learner outcomes and autonomous learning by increasing motivation, interaction, collaboration, and transformation of information.

Rudestam and Schoenholtz-Read (2010) found that online instruction can improve interactivity, social networking collaboration, and reflection compared to normal face-to-face classroom instruction. Social interaction in an online community was found to be a crucial factor in student success because it increased understanding of content and student retention (Bigatel et al., 2012). Tanveer (2011) found online learning can help students become autonomous and confident learners, and provide various activities and student-centered forms of learning, as well as foster intrinsic motivation, interaction of introverted students, and time management skills. Also, a high correlation between using

technology in the language classroom and higher achievement in language proficiency was found. Soliman (2014) found that online learning supplemented the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) face-to-face classroom and enhanced the students' language proficiency and independent learning skills. According to Garcia-Sanchez (2016), the ubiquitous learning environment was beneficial to EFL learners because it helped them build knowledge and use their metacognitive communicative skills through interactive discussion forums and in online space. In terms of effectiveness and student outcomes, online learning was not significantly different from, but better than regular classroom teaching (Means et al., 2013). Also, attrition rates for online courses are found to be frequently higher than face-to-face courses (Bigatel et al., 2012). Policy makers have thus implemented online education on the basis of student learning outcomes and cost-efficiency (Wise & Rothman, 2010).

Nevertheless, there are some drawbacks to ubiquitous computing and online learning in education. Students who were interacting with laptops in a classroom were not necessarily engaged in a meaningful way and computer use in class became the number one distraction from learning. Bigatel et al. (2012) found that, by reducing the traditional face-to-face time, online learners missed some potential teachable moments such as cognitive opportunities for higher-level knowledge acquisition and deeper thinking and processing. According to Burke (2013), no conclusive research suggests online education is going to enhance and transform successful learning. Rather, the learners' intrinsic motivation, culture, social class, and cognitive processes will influence their learning regardless of the instructional tool. Furthermore, although tools and applications may encourage students' multi-tasking in learning, they are not always facilitators of learning,

but sometimes distractions to learning. Tanveer (2011) also found challenges with technical, administrative, and pedagogical issues in online learning such as unreliable technology, instructors' and students' lack of confidence and experience with technology-based instruction and learning, and a lack of online learning resources for classes and electronic assessments.

Owston et al. (2013) found the quality of online discussions to not be as high as it is in face-to-face discussions, and that students tend to develop more cohesive and critical reflections in face-to-face discussions. Also, students in online discussions are likely to make postings without deep thinking as a formal requirement. Although students' preferences for tutorials in a face-to-face or online format are different, face-to-face tutorials are found to improve peer learning and alleviate students' concerns. However, due to their lack of learning skills, students usually do not take full advantage of online learning.

Therefore, Bigatel et al. (2012) emphasized the quality of the online learning experience for learner success in a ubiquitous online learning environment. Since teaching behaviors such as facilitating, communicating, motivating students, and involving them in the learning process prove highly effective to learner success, online educators should understand the learning process with technology and monitor the implementation and the effects of educational technology. Also, teachers' and learners' confidence in technology usage and online resources, along with professional development for quality online instruction were emphasized to improve learning effectiveness and to satisfy online learners' deficiencies in cognitive, teaching, and social presence (Tanveer, 2011). Although every curriculum could be converted into an online

course, the same cognitive processes would be involved in online and face-to-face learning (Burke, 2013). For that reason, the online instructor should keep a broad range of skills and competencies for cognitive process and learner success.

Background of Blended Learning

Although online education has been popular due to student learning outcomes and cost efficiency, the use of blended or hybrid approaches combining online activities and face-to-face instruction has been increasing in recent years and has become more common than either face-to-face or entirely online courses (Crawford, Barker, & Seyam, 2014; Ryan et al., 2016). One of the main reasons is that instructors have used online learning to supplement deficiencies in face-to-face instruction instead of replacing traditional classroom teaching (Wing & Khe, 2011). In order to serve each student's needs, classroom teaching alone was not enough to suit individual requirements; however, online learning was able to provide students with an opportunity to prepare themselves with the skills for online learning (Banditvilai, 2016). Network technology such as an online learning management application has brought new opportunities for teaching and learning by building and managing online courses, and online learning tools can extend the benefits of the course by supplementing the advantages of traditional classroom teaching (Ting & Chao, 2013).

The terminology "blended learning" was established around the beginning of the 21st century, and its system is one that combines face-to-face instruction with internet and digital media (Banditvilai, 2016). The term "blended learning" is used interchangeably with "hybrid learning" (Means et al., 2013; Ryan et al., 2016). A blended learning model involves incorporating traditional methods of learning and development with online

learning, or replacing face-to-face class time with computer-mediated instruction such as online activities and assessments (Grgurovic, 2011; Ting & Chao, 2013). According to Poon (2013), blended learning is a combination of face-to-face and online delivery methods, and the aim of the blended method is to complement each other and work to support students' success by transitioning learning and teaching from the face-to-face to online environments and lecture-centered to student-centered instruction. In order to enhance students' learning experiences, instructors should increase the interaction between themselves and students as well as among students along with the mechanism for integrating formative and summative feedback (Yen & Lee, 2011).

Thang et al. (2013) also described blended learning as a pedagogical approach, where the efficacy and social aspect of the classroom are combined with the technologically enhanced active learning of the online environment. Ting and Chao (2013) explained that blended learning has become more popular and practical in second-language classrooms because online learning tools provide more options and many benefits such as increased effectiveness, extended scope for learning, and easily accessible knowledge and information. In blended instruction, students are expected to be motivated and have a self-regulated learning strategy for successful outcomes.

In conclusion, a blended approach focuses on the process and synergy of blending online and face-to-face learning methods rather than on the learning design. Therefore, an important correlation is expected to be found between blended learning experiences and final achievement (Poon, 2013). Although various learning management systems provide students with methods for self-learning in a blended learning environment, teachers and the traditional face-to-face classroom are still necessary for the majority of students (Ting

& Chao, 2013). For this reason, blended learning has become more popular and practical for both teachers and learners.

A Learning Management System (LMS) in Blended Learning

In the blended environment, new technologies such as mobile phones and technology equipped classrooms will allow students to learn anytime and anywhere. (Grgurovic, 2011; McLaren, 2011). In a blended learning course, a learning management system is often used to provide access to the learning materials after class and to enhance online interactions between instructor and student or student and student (Poon, 2013). LMSs, a software system designed for teaching and learning, has been used in face-to-face classroom for course content organization, communication, assessment, gradebook, and management of materials and activities (Lopes, 2009). The majority of higher education institutions of US colleges and universities have adopted LMSs rapidly for course delivery and support of face-to-face instruction (Jane & Tanya, 2010). The most popular system available to most institutions is *Blackboard, WebCT, Moodle, LAMS,* and *SAKAI.* The challenge of utilizing one of these is finding a balance between its design and pedagogy (Chang, 2008). Some of the tools in an LMS can create collaborative learning environments inside and beyond the classroom by providing an opportunity for students to communicate with each other (Wanda, 2009).

The advantages of an LMS are 1) to assist teachers in redesigning, presenting, and evaluating courses; 2) to enhance teaching and learning performance; 3) to provide a convenient, communicative, and collaborative virtual environment; 4) to deliver user-friendly platforms and save instructors' time for tasks and programs; 5) to improve communication among students and instructors at a low cost, and 6) to increase learners'

confidence and collaboration (Yu, Sun, & Chang, 2010). According to Jane and Tanya (2010), the primary benefits of using an LMS for students are efficiency, accessibility of materials, flexibility, and participation in learning activities. In addition, LMS tools have been found to promote cognitive and emotional engagement with group members in the learning process, as well as individual learning autonomy within a community (Sardegna & Dugartsyrenova, 2014). For instance, asynchronous discussion forums, blogs, and wikis seem to enhance the process of knowledge sharing, and help monitor and facilitate critical thinking, self-reflection, and self-evaluation processes. Wanda (2009) also found that using LMS tools created a learner-centered, online collaborative environment, in which students better understood course concepts by reading other students' comments on the discussion board and through engaging with the course material more frequently compared to a traditional class.

Both faculty and students were found to have a positive view of the use of LMSs. From the faculty's perspective, an LMS is helpful in teaching basic skills, developing long-term mentoring, and providing constant feedback and course information to students (Wanda, 2009). From the student's perspective, the LMS encourages student-faculty contact, cooperation among students, and value-added learning, builds web community, emphasizes time on task, and increases enjoyment of learning (Poon, 2013). Also, it allows students to access assignments, grades, and information easily (Wanda, 2009). While providing great security and privacy, an LMS helps to create social networks, makes material available anytime and anywhere, facilitates a variety of assessment types, and allows faculty to easily reuse materials from previous semesters (Harrington et al., 2006). The LMS's discussion board, in particular, allows students to share their

experiences and knowledge, and there they can appreciate their classmates' views and opinions (Wanda, 2009).

In a blended language course of higher education, faculty and students showed positive attitudes towards the use of an LMS because of advantages such as the students' connection between in-class work and online work, as well as the engagement and integration, and interaction between the teachers and students (George-Walker, Hafeez-Baig, Gururajan, & Danaher, 2010; Grgurovic, 2011). In a foreign language course, an LMS was found to improve a students' listening, speaking, reading, grammar, writing, and pronunciation skills through interaction with peers and instructors on the discussion board, and was helpful in having students learn about various registers and the appropriateness of language constructions in different contexts (Alberth, 2013; Godwin-Jones, 2011; Grgurovic, 2011).

Grgurovic (2011) examined an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class using a blended learning design, which consisted of face-to-face teaching and online instruction. This study observed the blended learning EFL class with particular attention on the integration of technology with face-to-face instruction. The findings implied that the use of an LMS technology improved the students' connection between class work and online work and increased their engagement level in speaking tasks in the lab. The teacher believed that working on online materials in the lab allowed students to have more individualized instruction, as well as a chance to help less attentive students control their learning level. The findings provided insight into allowing students the opportunity to practice speaking and pronunciation through the new type of tasks in the LMS. Most of all, the results showed that it helped students not only become autonomous but also take

responsibility for their own learning. Similarly, Smirnova and Nuzha (2013) found an LMS can improve students' academic presentation skills involving reading, writing, and presenting, and also develop their reflective learning skills.

In second language education, tools such as weblog, discussion board, and instant messenger contribute to students' linguistic development as well as their autonomy by having them negotiate between using the multiple resources provided through the LMS. In order to investigate the impact on learner autonomy capacity, Dang and Robertson (2010) asked EFL students in Vietnamese universities to give their opinions on a web 2.0 version of an LMS, which has recently become available in EFL education. The findings implied that the LMS component supported students with initiating, monitoring, and evaluating their learning. Some students responded that their interest in the course increased through online conversation within the LMS, blurring the gap between school and social environments and allowing a space for socializing and understanding others' personal lives. However, some students who did not participate in the LMS activities regularly also made achievements in class. That is, although LMS usage was indicated to positively affect idea exchanges and negotiations, this result correlated with individual students' online habits and the quality of contributed content in drawing participants' attention and involvement. The research suggests that when educators employ effective facilitation for suitable knowledge generation and use students' social e-habits for educational purposes, students will be able to stay focused with an LMS.

Despite the many benefits of using an LMS for the transformation of education, researchers found some concerns and dissatisfaction regarding the effectiveness of LMS tools for student learning. First, some instructors have adopted only a limited number of

tools from LMSs, such as communication or material distribution because of the additional demands on time required by other tools. Secondly, some students had difficulty accepting responsibility for their own learning and felt isolated from the social interaction that they get in a face-to-face classroom environment (Poon, 2013). Additionally, lack of support for course design and in acquiring new technology skills for use in the online community, discussion forums, and student management pose challenges for universities. In particular, both instructors' and students' perceived value of an LMS and their previous experience with technology have an impact on the usage of the LMS and student satisfaction. For instance, the students who perceived online discussion as burdensome and time-consuming found collaborative tasks to be purposeless and boring (Sardegna & Dugartsyrenova, 2014).

Foreign language instructors have also pointed out the limitations of an LMS for language learning because these systems have not been specifically designed for language learning and its teaching purposes. Yu, Sun, and Chang (2010) examined college teachers' and students' experiences with LMSs in regard to language teaching and learning. The results showed that the participants generally had a positive attitude towards the use of an LMS because it not only provided students with collaborative learning and convenient access to course materials and language resources, but also helped the teachers carry out their teaching philosophy. However, the findings highlighted that LMSs was not specifically designed for the purpose of language learning and teaching, but has many potential advantages. The author suggested assisting instructors in developing a strategy and pedagogy for their use of LMSs by providing orientations, professional workshops, and teaching demonstrations to maximize the

functionality of LMSs usage in language courses. Most of all, in order to minimize these disadvantages, academic institutions should provide the support system for and the development of an LMS designed with the purpose of language teaching and learning.

In the blended language learning environment, both teachers and students need to learn new technology in order to use an LMS, and most importantly, students are required to develop autonomy (Grgurovic, 2011). Some students showed concern regarding lack of familiarity with technology and little to no previous online study experience (Smirnova & Nuzha, 2013). Because e-learning requires a new pedagogy of teaching, faculty needs to have the highest level of digital competence with tools such as forums, chats, and portfolios, and be able to think creatively with them. However, many faculty members see LMSs as only a tool that will not facilitate quality education (Chang, 2008). Despite the ability for an LMS to improve social and constructive learning, some instructors only adopt the use of the communication and material distribution tools among the many available (Jane & Tanya, 2010). Even though students value online discussion and communication among themselves and with teachers in an LMS, they noted difficulties with the asynchronous forum and inability for real-time discussion (George-Walker et al., 2010). In other words, faculty members that are less technologically adapt and less familiar with the LMS, and the students who do not have the time and motivation to participate in the asynchronous discussion show a lack of engagement with it.

Most of all, the research on student and instructor involvement impacting LMS success has shown that instructor involvement and guidance are very important in encouraging students to use the LMS and increase their benefits from its use. Jane and

Tanya (2010) investigated this correlation between student and instructor involvement in an LMS and the success of the system. The results showed that instructor involvement affected student use of the system, and that involvement from all affected student satisfaction with the LMS, though it was found to be a small effect. Even if student involvement impacted the benefits that they received with LMS use, it did not affect actual learning or learning efficiency. On the other hand, instructor involvement affected the students' learning efficiency and perceived learning, though this effect was small as well. Instructor involvement is very important in encouraging students to use the LMS appropriately, and more student involvement with the system was emphasized in improving effectiveness and productivity for studying. Yu et al. (2010) also found that instructors' commitment and good pedagogy in using an LMS can not only improve their teaching efficiency and students' satisfaction but also decrease learners' learning anxiety.

These factors can be taken into account when delivering the LMS-based blended learning course. Technological barriers can be overcome by the proper selection of the LMS tools, and any problem with the students' lack of blended learning experience can be solved by providing them with relevant instructions (Smirnova & Nuzha, 2013). For language instructions, assisting instructors in developing specific skills in the strategy and pedagogical design of language course materials along with providing orientations, professional workshops, and teaching demonstration are suggested to maximize the functionality of LMS usage in a blended language course (Yu et al., 2010). Since not all students are autonomous learners, scaffolding should be provided in order for them to take more responsibility for their own learning, but this requires the instructor's facilitating skills as well (Alberth, 2013). Providing a well-designed LMS, pedagogical

targets, guidelines for language teaching and learning purposes, and carefully planned online curricula can enable an LMS to function as a learning platform rather than merely a management system in foreign language education (Yu et al., 2010). Facilitating online interactions, providing modeling, and integrating technology-enhanced activities are also important for students to engage in academic activities (Sardegna & Dugartsyrenova, 2014).

Many faculty members emphasized that instructors and students should play the major roles in fostering good education, and suggested including more sophisticated interface design of LMS and pedagogical considerations in facilitating educational achievement (Chang, 2008). Most of all, the teachers' intellectual excitement, interpersonal concerns, and motivation in using an LMS are the keys to make connections with students (Lopes, 2009). A well-organized learning environment provided by instructors is also emphasized for student learning success (Yu et al., 2010). According to Srichanyachon (2014), the better the attitude toward using the Internet for English learning that students have, the more positive their attitudes toward using an LMS are. Therefore, teachers should help students understand the advantages of using the Internet and an LMS as language learning tools. When the LMS is used effectively to help students manage, organize, and keep track of their learning, the LMS course will be viewed as the greatest benefit to learning, but when the LMS is over-, under-, or misused, the course will be seen as a constraint to learning (Lopes, 2009).

In summary, in a blended learning environment, an LMS impacts student learning by enhancing student and instructor interaction and collaboration as well as improving learner autonomy. As the use of an LMS allows students to learn anytime and anywhere

in a ubiquitous computing environment, students and instructors play new roles as autonomous learners and facilitators, respectively. Since LMS components support students by initiating, monitoring, and evaluating their learning, students can develop their autonomy. Most of all, a positive attitude towards the use of an LMS and instructor involvement can increase learning efficiency and learner satisfaction along with learner autonomy. The continuous research of methods that integrate various technologies into teaching, as well as the growing awareness of the importance of student and instructor engagement and learner autonomy will improve student academic performance and satisfaction.

Learner Autonomy and Language Achievement in Blended Language Learning

The goal of adult education is to help students achieve learner autonomy because autonomous learners take responsibility for their learning and actively seek new knowledge by engaging with the cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social dimensions of the learning process (Kaur & Kaur Sidhu, 2010). Due to the change in paradigm from teaching to learning, teachers and students have new roles as online tutors and autonomous learners, respectively (Grgurovic, 2011). In the blended environment, the main role of the student is to manage his or her own learning process because blended learning provides a learner-centered environment and supports the progress of autonomous skills (Isiguzel, 2014).

Learner autonomy is the ability to take charge of one's own learning by initiating, monitoring, and evaluating one's learning process (Dang & Robertson, 2010; Gunn, 2011; Illés, 2012). Autonomy is also defined as a learner's psychological relation to the learning process and content as well as a recognition of the learners' rights within the

educational system (Snodin, 2013). Autonomous learners are self-driven and responsible for all decisions concerning their learning, to include determining objectives, defining the contents and progressions, selecting implemented methods and techniques, monitoring the acquisition procedure, and evaluating what has been done (Balcikanli, 2010; Mohamadpour, 2013). In other words, the idea of learner autonomy involves independent, self-regulatory, and self-directed learning, with the learner-centered approach. However, there are two kinds of autonomous learners-- proactive and reactive (Snodin, 2013). Proactive autonomous learners are able to have responsibility of their learning, decide their own objectives, select procedure, and evaluate their learning. On the other hand, reactive autonomous learners do not initiate their own directions, but they can follow their goals by organizing their resources autonomously.

In foreign language learning, autonomy is defined as becoming a more self-regulated learner that can control one's own learning by initiating, monitoring, and evaluating learning processes (Dang & Robertson, 2010). Self-regulated learning is included within learner autonomy (Nakata, 2014). Also, learner autonomy refers to the capacity to control important aspects of one's language learning as well as learning that takes place outside the context of formal instruction (Benson, 2013). Autonomous language learners are competent and independent language users capable of the use of linguistic and other resources, online problem solving and decision making (Illés, 2012). Usually, the expert language learners who possess high motivation and self-efficacy can understand and manage their own learning, and autonomous language learning automatically leads to successful future language use in real-life communication outside the classroom. In other words, language learning autonomy requires learning strategies,

motivation, cooperative learning, and language proficiency (Godwin-Jones, 2011; Mohamadpour, 2013). In addition, language learners' autonomy leads to lifelong language learning (Nakata, 2014). For the promotion of learner autonomy, language learners need to continue language learning throughout their lives.

Therefore, in order to develop language learning autonomy, Nakata (2014) suggests students develop the skill of self-regulation and a sense of agency in learning a foreign language because a self-regulated language learner becomes a more responsible and autonomous learner as a lifelong language learner. Furthermore, teacher autonomy is a precondition to promote learner autonomy because it can help learners' self-regulation and their sense of agency which promote learner autonomy. Similarly, Godwin-Jones (2011) emphasized the students' self-guided language skills and proper motivation for independent study. For pursuing individual learning, students need to develop effective personal strategies such as writing learner diaries or E-portfolios, but a peer network is another critical component for the development of effective learner autonomy.

According to Lai and Li (2011), computer mediated communication (CMC) helps learners not only improve a positive second language persona but also self-confidence and autonomy through peers. Dang and Robertson (2010) also found in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, CMC integration, which emphasizes the interactions between learners and their learning environment, can develop learner autonomy by fostering reflective learning, enhancing learning engagement, and facilitating interactive collaboration. In higher education, CMC has transformed the teaching and learning methodologies from lecturing to facilitating and has promoted independent and self-

regulated learners (Kaur & Kaur Sidhu, 2010). In other words, this new paradigm shift helps students learn how to learn and become autonomous learners.

In addition, appropriate learning management system (LMS) integration in foreign language education has also been found to foster reflective learning, enhance learning engagement, and facilitate interactive collaborations which are prerequisites for the development of learner autonomy (Dang & Robertson, 2010). A discussion board tool in the LMS can help students not only reflect on their own ideas and language which supports critical thinking and learner autonomy but also correct or reformulate what they have said, because synchronous and asynchronous written or spoken dialogues can be recorded and stored online as a language database, (Brook, 2013; Kaur & Kaur Sidhu, 2010). Additionally, a peer network accessed through a discussion forum on the LMS was found to be effective in developing learner autonomy (Godwin-Jones, 2011).

However, though research findings indicate that the Learning Management System component supported students with initiating, monitoring, and evaluating their learning, the level of effects on each student varied because of the different interpretations of learning and online habits, as well as students' lack of confidence in managing their own learning and computing abilities (Dang & Robertson, 2010). Very few learners were found to be spontaneously self-directed or autonomous learners, and learner autonomy was able to be only effectively enhanced when the training of skills, knowledge, and attitude were provided in online distant learning programs (Kaur & Kaur Sidhu, 2010). Therefore, the importance of the educators' role is once again emphasized because they can systematically provide learners with guidance on recommended online tools and training programs on how they can take responsibility for their own learning in

a face-to-face or online context (Dang & Robertson, 2010; Godwin-Jones, 2011). Kaur and Kaur Sidhu (2010) emphasized that learners should be assisted to develop the ability, knowledge, and skills to plan, organize, monitor, and evaluate their own learning before having an online learning experience, in addition to possessing the desired computing skills and attitude towards using an LMS in a language course. Most of all, an autonomy-supportive classroom should be created by increasing learner involvement through project works, giving students positions of authority, and letting learners go through self-assessment (Mohamadpour, 2013).

In foreign language education, the importance of autonomy has been emphasized with the combination of learning strategies, motivation, cooperative learning, and language proficiency (Mohamadpour, 2013). Especially regarding student language proficiency, high proficiency learners are assumed to be more aware of autonomous learning because they tend to be more independent in their learning; however, the research found that such awareness is shown to be low among high and low proficiency learners. In other words, the high proficiency learners are not necessarily better aware of autonomous learning compared to the low proficiency learners. It demonstrates that responsibility for autonomous learning sits with both the learner and the teacher although there is a paradox about the teacher's role in autonomous language learning. In order to foster learners' autonomy, the teacher's commitment to encourage students to work collaboratively and the student's willingness and ability to act independently are important in classrooms. Also, accessible and reliable technology, sufficient computer literacy in students, good communication with and support from peers, and the importance of task design are emphasized to develop autonomous learning (Gunn, 2011).

According to Ting and Chao (2013), although college students generally have good self-regulated learning strategies for blended instruction, their learning achievements differ based on their strategies; students with high self-regulated learning strategies have better achievement scores than low self-regulated learners. They recommend more studies about the possible impact of other factors on students' self-regulated learning scores and how the underachievers can improve their self-regulated learning strategies and learning achievements in blended instruction.

In the blended foreign language environment, students have gained not only high academic success in language learning but also autonomous learning skills (Isiguzel, 2014; Ja'ashan, 2015). In addition, the students' attitudes toward blended language learning were highly positive because of enjoyment, accessibility, and ease of use and content. Similarly, Sucaromana (2013) and Isiguzel (2014) found that students in a study of English and German language learning had greater satisfaction and success with the blended language learning environment than students in the face-to-face learning environment, as well as significantly higher levels of intrinsic motivation and a better attitude towards the subject.

For student language achievement in blended foreign language instruction, Lee and Lee (2013) investigated EFL pre-service teachers' perceptions toward a blended instruction model for second language (L2) writing. The research found that the participants in the blended writing course received higher scores at the end of the study, and the tools and the tasks provided in the model were useful and helpful for their writing skill improvement because they reinforced learning and promoted interaction and communication among the students and the teacher. When Miyazoe and Anderson (2010)

examined students' perceptions of a blended online writing course design, they found that wikis, blogs, and forums enhanced their English writing ability. Moreover, traditional classes with online materials strengthened the students' autonomy, reflection and powers of research, and enabled them to review and control their own learning.

For listening and speaking skills, Grgurovic (2011) and Chen (2015) examined a blended model in an English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) class combined with LMS technology; the findings indicated that all language skills were successfully incorporated. For example, the Taiwanese EFL students improved their overall oral proficiency as well as pronunciation and lexical accuracy with a blended model. Regarding reading comprehension skill, Behjat, Yamini, and Bagheri (2012) found that blended classroom instruction with technology can help EFL learners better enhance their reading comprehension when the pre-test and the post-test were compared to those from a traditional face-to-face classroom. In addition to language proficiency skills, Cooner (2010) found that blended learning can develop students' reflect-on-action skills and improve their learning experiences by providing them with online lectures, communication tools, and online video case studies and by allowing them to have opportunities to review existing knowledge.

Overall findings about blended language instruction show that online learning leads to better student learning outcomes than face-to-face instruction alone, but generally community college students experience less success in online-only courses than face-to-face courses because of technical difficulties, a sense of isolation, a relative lack of structure, and a general lack of support (Ryan et al., 2016). However, Xu and Jaggars (2011) found that there are no consistent or significant differences in outcomes for

community college students when comparing blended and face-to-face settings. The findings that students in blended courses had fewer challenges than online-only courses show equivalent outcomes in blended and face-to face settings. These findings stand in contrast to results from Means et al. (2013) demonstrating significantly greater learning gains among students in blended compared to face-to-face settings. Inconsistent findings suggest administrators and policy makers need more evidence about the effectiveness of blended courses and should investigate how and under what conditions blended courses can enhance student learning outcomes (Ryan et al., 2016).

In conclusion, in order to improve student autonomy and language skill in a blended language environment, providing up-front guidance for using the tool or service of CMC (computer mediated communication) or an LMS (learning management system) and leading students to become self-reflective learners are emphasized (Godwin-Jones, 2011). For lifelong learning, both teachers and students need a growth mindset to see an individual's ability to become an autonomous target language user (Illés, 2012). Gunn (2011) emphasizes the teacher's active involvement for the achievement of student learning goals and the promotion of learner autonomy. Also, teachers' pedagogy in the design and scaffolding of metacognitive strategy instruction in blended instruction are emphasized by Smith and Craig (2013). Most of all, the research of blended language learning is necessary to improve student learning achievement and learner autonomy, because the impact of autonomous language learning will grow for language proficiency and language maintenance for not only personal, but professional reasons as well (Godwin-Jones, 2011).

Benefits, Challenges, and Suggestions of Blended Learning

The purpose of using the blended learning approach is to retain the advantages of face-to-face interaction while extending the benefits of the course through an internet online application, such as enhanced learning effectiveness and outcomes, extended scope for learning, economy of time and costs, faster access to knowledge and information, student satisfaction, and flexibility (Poon, 2013; López-Pérez, Pérez-López, & Rodríguez-Ariza, 2011). Because blended instruction combines the merits of both traditional classroom and online learning, blended learning became popular and more practical for teachers and learners (Wu & Liu, 2013).

In the blended learning environment, students can have various benefits such as cost effectiveness, more linguistic and cultural sources, communities for educators and learners, and self-learning opportunities for students (Ting & Chao, 2013). According to Poon (2013), several research studies have shown that blended learning courses improved student learning outcomes and decreased student drop-failure-withdrawal rates. Another key benefit of blended learning is to reinforce the student's autonomy, reflection, research, and their own pace of learning by allowing them to access the internet whenever and wherever they want. Most of all, blended learning promotes student satisfaction and motivation by involving them in the learning process and developing their critical thinking skills. Student satisfaction in blended learning has been reported to be higher than in purely face-to-face courses.

Wing and Khe (2011) found that student learning outcome rates are very successful in blended courses, and that usually the rates were equal to or higher than the face-to-face and fully online courses. Also, blended learning can lower student attrition rates, which were generally comparable to face-to-face courses. Due to the high number

of enrolled students and successful learning outcomes, many colleges and universities have implemented blended learning method into teaching practice. López-Pérez et al. (2011) also discovered that the use of blended learning reduced dropout rates and raised exam pass rates. Especially the joint e-learning activities, which supported and complemented face-to-face classes, positively influenced students' final outcomes. The results confirmed that students showed positive perceptions towards blended learning such as a high degree of utility, motivation and satisfaction. They concluded that blended learning could improve the student learning process by leading students to have a positive attitude towards learning.

According to Owston et al. (2013), students' maturity was found to result in not only a high degree of self-regulation and motivation for learning, but also positive thinking about blended learning. Students' performances in online courses were better than those in traditional face-to-face courses. They often reported in the blended learning environment their understanding of subjective learning had been improved when compared to traditional face-to-face or fully-online course; however, according to instructors, there was no significant difference on students' test results. Students believe that their conceptions and responsibility of learning, as well as the use of interactive technologies in online environment have influenced their achievement.

George-Walker, Hafeez-Baig, and Danaher (2010) also discovered that the blended learning environment enabled students to have more opportunities for engagement and interaction and provided them with rich learning context and problem-based learning (PBL) experience, fostering greater learner engagement. Online materials in the blended learning class improved integration and interaction by using an LMS

(Grgurovic, 2011). Students responded that they were able to see the connection between class work and online work. According to Poon (2013), blended learning has the ability to foster not only a professional learning community, but social cohesion as well because online learning is combined with face-to-face interaction. Most of all, blended learning has potential to provide students with transformative, active and meaningful learning.

Blended instruction is known as a popular and practical method for both teachers and learners even in second language classrooms (Ting & Chao, 2013). It not only retains the advantages of face-to-face classroom interaction, but also brings many benefits, such as providing more choices in learning, enhancing learning effectiveness, extending scope for learning, reducing time and costs, and supplying knowledge and information fast. Wu and Liu (2013) explored student satisfaction with English as a Foreign Language (EFL) blended learning. The research found that postgraduate students showed higher positive attitude and satisfaction than undergraduate students. Students' satisfaction with EFL blended learning is related to learning climate, perceived enjoyment, usefulness, system functionality, social interaction, content feature and performance expectation.

However, although the blended learning environment enhances student learning, there are some challenges for both teachers and students (Poon, 2013). For students, this includes isolated feelings, expectations of less class work, and lack of time management skills and responsibility for personal learning due to the reduced social interaction in a face-to-face classroom. Another challenge is difficulty with technologies such as poor Internet connections and lack of support for course design from universities. Both students and teachers needed to learn many new skills (Grgurovic, 2011). For example, teachers needed to learn the new technology-based teaching methods of integrating

materials, using hardware and software, and troubleshooting computer problems. Also, faculty needed to invest time and effort to create a suitable blended learning environment with the new pedagogical philosophy for blended learning (McLaren, 2011). Time concerns and acquiring new technology skills are challenges for both faculty and students, and these can lead them to feel overwhelmed and tired (Poon, 2013).

In the blended learning environment, a number of students preferred face-to-face teaching to online learning, and some students reported the lack of real-time discussion with peers and instructors and printed materials or textbooks (George-Walker et al., 2010). Since these challenges affected student engagement and motivation, students' responsibility for their learning has been emphasized (Grgurovic, 2011). However, students' autonomic engagement and responsibility for their learning are ongoing challenges in blended learning (George-Walker et al., 2010). It is difficult to find the optimal balance between face-to-face teaching and online learning. Therefore, various blended learning techniques are necessary to optimize students' successful learning.

For a successful and sustainable blended learning environment, the curriculum for blended learning should be reviewed and adjusted, and faculty should put commitment and enthusiasm into a course and improve technical ability (McLaren, 2011). If the curriculum design for blended learning is not done properly, or if a faculty member disengages or lacks interaction with the blended technology, it will dissatisfy students or decrease interaction with the students. In order to increase students' satisfaction in blended learning, the following factors are suggested: 1) making joint efforts by teachers and students; 2) improving the system interaction and function; 3) improving both teachers and students' computer skills and providing necessary assistance; 4) giving

students timely feedback, interacting with students frequently, and encouraging students to interact with others; and 5) designing and organizing teaching activities and balancing the classroom teaching and online teaching activities (Wu & Liu, 2013). Most of all, a successful key factor is to consider the pedagogy and instructional design by utilizing the technology tools, interacting with students, motivating students for online discussion, and delivering online content materials (Wing & Khe, 2011). Since the blended learning environment provides students with a variety of face-to-face and online activities and cooperative opportunities in their learning experiences, students are required to be more active and independent for their success of learning and motivation (Isiguzel, 2014).

However, regarding student learning outcomes, researchers found different results. Xu and Jaggars (2011) compared community college student outcomes in face-to-face, blended, and online-only classrooms. Student outcomes in blended learning courses were not significantly different from those in face-to-face courses. On the other hand, Means et al. (2013) found that student outcomes in blended courses were greater than in face-to-face courses. Therefore, learning outcomes in blended learning need to be researched more. Primarily, before making the decision of adopting blended instruction, policy makers and practitioners need to review research-based information about the effectiveness of both pure online and blended learning (Ryan et al., 2016).

Summary

The purpose of this study is to identify the student perception about the effectiveness factors and challenges of language achievement and autonomous learning in a blended Korean language course, and then promote student success in higher foreign language education. Ubiquitous computing environment has altered student learning by

offering online distance learning and blended learning courses. Blended learning comprised of traditional class and an LMS has enhanced both learning and teaching, and the roles of teachers and students have become online tutors and autonomous learners respectively (Grgurovic, 2011). For effective blended learning, six parts were reviewed in this literature review: learning theory, ubiquitous computing environment and online learning, background of blended learning, LMS, language achievement and learner autonomy in blended learning environment, and benefits and challenges of blended learning.

For learning theory of blended learning, sociocultural, constructivist, and metacognition theory are discussed as a theoretical framework to inform this research. These theories share common characteristics, such as interaction, collaboration, constructive knowledge, Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), scaffolding, as well as learner centered and authentic learning. Social interaction and collaboration between the novice and expert learner through scaffolding are emphasized in sociocultural theory (Shamir, 2013). In a ubiquitous computing environment, students and instructors can interact each other via computer mediated communication (CMC) or learning management system (LMS). Constructivist theory, which is based upon foundational ideas of the sociocultural theory, emphasizes authentic learning and a learner-centered focus for teaching and learning (Li, 2012). In order to promote learners' successful attainment of knowledge, learner autonomy is very important because learner autonomy is an ability to accept responsibility for one's own learning as well as to initiate, monitor, and evaluate learning processes (Dang & Robertson, 2010). For learner autonomy,

students need self-regulated learning skills (Nakata, 2014), and for self-regulated learning, metacognition is powerful to promote learners' successful knowledge acquisition.

In a ubiquitous technology environment, the traditional classroom has been transformed into an online class, and the use of technology in online courses has improved student learning and interaction between students or with teachers by allowing students anytime and anywhere to access their courses (Garcia-Sanchez, 2016). The use of blended or hybrid approaches combining online activities and face-to-face instruction has especially been increasing in recent years and become more common than either face-to-face or entirely online courses (Crawford, Barker, & Seyam, 2014; Ryan et al., 2016). In a blended learning environment, it was found that face-to- face lectures enhanced students' language achievement and distance learning verified in an effective and active way, with flexible person and group based online aspects (Isiguzel, 2014). Blended learning has provided students with a significant and positive impact on academic achievement (Obiedat et al., 2014). Also, blended language learning with learning management system indicates that an LMS can be beneficial to students in terms of collaborative and interactive learning, development of language skills, as well as self-confidence and autonomous learning. In foreign language education, the relationship between learner autonomy and language proficiency has been studied because high proficiency learners are assumed to be more aware of autonomous learning. However, the research found that such awareness is shown to be low among high and low proficiency learners, but high achievers show more satisfaction about the blended format because of convenience, flexibility, and engagement (Owston, York, & Murtha, 2013).

The usage of an LMS in blended learning was found to affect students' language achievement and autonomous learning, but language instructors have also identified the limitations of LMSs for language teaching and learning. The effects of an LMS on each student have been varied due to students' different interpretations of learning and lack of autonomous learning capacity. Therefore, the research findings suggest that both students and instructors are required to develop their ability, awareness, skills, and attitudes to support the system through orientations, professional workshops, or class demonstration. Student and instructor involvement in an LMS, as well as students' autonomic engagement and responsibility for learning will be challenges for both students and instructors in blended language instruction (Yu et al., 2010).

In conclusion, in order to improve student autonomy and language skill in a blended language environment, providing up-front guidance for using the technology tools or LMS service and leading students to become self-reflective and lifelong learners are emphasized (Godwin-Jones, 2011; Illés, 2012). Although there is some evidence supporting the benefits of student language achievement and learner autonomy with blended learning, more evidence about the effectiveness factors of blended courses is necessary to design an effective blended language curriculum.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Blended learning became popular and more practical for both teachers and learners because of its effective methodology for course delivery (Owston, York, & Murtha, 2013; Thang et al., 2013; Wu & Liu, 2013). In the blended learning environment, a learning management system (LMS) is used to supplement the advantages of face-to-face classroom instruction by providing students with various benefits such as learning effectiveness, social interaction, autonomous learning, and access to knowledge and information (Grgurovic, 2011; Juhary, 2013; Ting & Chao, 2013; Wu & Liu, 2013). Since a blended approach focuses on the process and synergy of blending online and face-to-face learning methods, there is an important correlation between blended learning experiences and final achievement (Poon, 2013). The high level of involvement with an LMS of students and instructors during their course has positively influenced the students' satisfaction with the LMS, benefits of learning achievement, and autonomous learning skill.

In order to improve student language achievement and autonomous learning skill, Osan LTD, DLIFLC, implemented blended Korean language instruction combined with an LMS in 2012. Since then, the overall quality of teaching and student language proficiency have improved, but students who have low language achievement seem to have a lack of autonomous language learning skills and difficulty in increasing their language proficiency levels. Regarding the blended instruction, some researchers found that blended learning influenced student language skills and that they had higher achievement than participants in exclusively face-to-face or online learning (Bueno-Alastuey & López Pérez, 2014; Isiguzel, 2014; Lee & Lee, 2013). On the other hand,

some researchers found there to be no statistically important differences in achievement between a blended and face-to-face setting (Ja'ashan, 2015; Owston et al., 2013). This highlights the need to study students' perceptions of the effectiveness on language achievement and autonomous learning skill in a blended Korean language course which has not been previously identified.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to discover the perceptions of American students studying Korean language at the Osan LTD regarding the effectiveness of the blended Korean language curriculum on student autonomous learning and language achievement, especially in listening and reading comprehension skills. This study is phenomenological because students will share their own perceptions of blended language learning experiences at the Osan LTD. The anonymous, open-ended survey was conducted online using Survey Monkey with American students who already took the blended Korean language courses in a participating college.

All eligible participants received an explanatory email invitation for the research survey. Survey participants were selected among students who attended the intermediate and advanced Korean blended classes at Osan LTD, Korea between 2014 and 2016. The collected data was examined, compared, and categorized into themes. With the growing market of blended education and the desire to design effective blended language courses, knowledge acquired from this study will enable instructors to more effectively plan curricula and increase student success and autonomous learning skills through blended instruction (Ja'ashan, 2015; Ryan et al.,2016). In order to address the question of how and what factors blended Korean language instruction influence student language achievement and autonomous learning skills, the following questions guided this research.

Q1. How do students perceive the effectiveness of language achievement in especially listening and reading skills in a blended Korean language course?

Q2. What factors do students perceive improve or hinder their listening and reading skills in a blended Korean language course?

Q3. How do students perceive the improvement of autonomous learning skills in a blended Korean language course?

Q4. What factors do students perceive improve or hinder their autonomous learning skills in a blended Korean language course?

Q5. How do students perceive the effective blended language curriculum for student success?

In addition to the primary research questions, students' challenges and concerns were requested to increase blended language course effectiveness and learner success. Chapter 3 explained why a qualitative study was chosen for this research and why the anonymous online survey was used to gather data.

Research Methods and Design

This qualitative research followed a case study design. A case study design is the best approach for this research because the case study method is appropriate to provide an individual's description (Cozby, 2012). This study meets the criteria of a phenomenon and exploratory case study because the researcher explored the phenomenon of students' perceptions of the effectiveness of language achievement and autonomous learning in a blended Korean language course (Yin, 2003). Since prior research has shown inconsistent results about the comparison of learning achievement in a blended course and face-to-

face course, students' perceptions of language achievement in blended language instruction can be considered and should be explored (Ryan et al., 2016).

Yin (2014) recommends that a case study design includes five important components: study questions, propositions, unit analysis, the logic linking the data to the propositions, and the criteria for interpreting the findings. First of all, in this study, data were gathered through the anonymous online survey using Survey Monkey. The questionnaires were open-ended and included two parts: biographic information and blended language experiences, which asked for students' perceptions of their learning experiences in the blended Korean language course they took at the Osan LTD, Korea. Creating study questions for research was likely to decide objectives of the study. The online questionnaire sought how students perceive the effectiveness of language achievement and autonomous language learning in a blended Korean language course, and the purpose of this research was to improve the student language achievement and the quality of the blended Korean language course.

Secondly, the propositions of this research were the effective factors for a blended language course based on the analysis of student perceptions. The collected data were analyzed based on each unit, and then the analyzed data were logically connected to the propositions after interpreting the findings based on the criteria.

Population

Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC) offers more than two dozen languages to approximately 35oo American students. Osan Language Training Detachment (LTD) located in Korea has provided five-week Refresher, intermediate, and advanced Korean language courses since 2008. For this case study, the participants were

American students who attended intermediate and advanced blended Korean language courses applied with the learning management system (LMS), *SAKAI* in 2014, 2015, and 2016 at the Osan LTD, DLIFLC in Korea. A blended Korean language curriculum combined with *SAKAI*, was implemented in 2012, but at that time only assignment and discussion forums were used for instruction. Since the use of fully blended instruction with various tools of the LMS began in 2014, the students who attended intermediate and advanced Korean language courses from 2014 to 2016 were invited to participate in the online survey via email. The total number of students who took the intermediate and advanced Korean language courses is approximately 73 during the period of 2014-2016, but only 43 students were offered to take the online survey because the researcher had only those students' contact information. The students' participation in the survey was voluntary, and they were contacted via personal email.

Sample

For this research, a purposeful sampling strategy was used because this sampling can identify and select individuals' experiences about a phenomenon the researcher is interested in (Palinkas et. al, 2015). The researcher chose representative samples from each intermediate and advanced course in 2014, 2015, and 2016 based on their Korean language proficiency levels. Since most graduate students have Korean learning experience not only at the Osan LTD but also at the other LTDs of DLIFLC, they had the ability to compare their language learning experiences in face-to-face and blended learning courses. Based on the students' records of DLPT scores and class levels (intermediate and advanced), participants were invited to take part in this qualitative case study.

According to Patton (2001), sample size for saturation or redundancy and variation within target population should be considered to determine sample size for qualitative studies. This shapes how large a sample size should be for consistent patterns and diversity or variation representing the population. For phenomenology case study, assessing 10 people is recommended, but if reaching saturation prior to assessing 10 people, using fewer is adequate. Therefore, the researcher assessed 10 samples for this case study. All participants who received an invitation email read the online consent form for ethical considerations of human research before they started the survey. This study received approval from the Institutional Review Boards of Northcentral University before collecting the data. The researcher assured participants that all data would be confidential, and participants were allowed to leave the online survey at any time.

Materials/Instruments

The research questions guided this case study using online questionnaires. The qualitative questionnaire, which has been included in Appendix A, was used as the means of data collection. It included consistent questions for reliability (Yin, 2009) and involved two parts: Part I- Biographic information and Part II- Blended Korean language learning experiences. The questionnaire asking for the participants' blended language learning experiences is open-ended and anonymous using the online platform Survey Monkey.

The questionnaire for Part I yielded basic data for demographics including gender, ethnicity, age group, marital status, education level, Korean language proficiency, and blended class experience for each of the participants. The questionnaire for Part II consisted of seven open-ended questions. The first question asked participants how they perceive the effectiveness of language achievement in listening and reading skills in a

blended Korean language course. The second question asked what factors they perceive improve or hinder their listening and reading skills in a blended language course. The third question asked how they perceive the improvement of autonomous learning skills in a blended Korean language course, and the fourth asked what factors students perceive improve or hinder their autonomous learning skills in a blended Korean language course. The fifth asked how they perceive the effective blended language curriculum for student success. The sixth asked what challenges or concerns they have regarding the blended Korean language course, and the seventh requested any suggestions they had to improve language achievement and autonomous learning skill in the blended language learning environment.

Data Collection, Processing, and Analysis

For this study, data were gathered from a qualitative questionnaire online. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants via email, and if they were interested in participating, they were invited to go to the survey link which was created through Survey Monkey. The survey included the consent form and a two-part questionnaire: Part I- Demographic information and Part II- Blended Korean language learning experiences. The online questionnaire was chosen to collect data because participants could answer the questions less intrusively with a generous timeframe, and anonymously to encourage honest feedback (Holt & Pamment, 2011). All questions asking for blended Korean language learning experiences in Part II were open-ended to collect their perceptions for this research.

The primary instrument of the data collection for this study was the researcher because the researcher analyzed data based on the categorized common themes for

conceptualization (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). After collecting the data through Survey Monkey, common themes were arranged for readers to observe the participants' perceptions. Repeating data lent credibility to this qualitative study. For the data analysis, the researcher manually assigned each observed concept from every questionnaire a color code and created a word table for each research question in order to show basic demographic similarities and differences, Korean language proficiency levels, as well as trends in their perceptions of blended Korean language learning.

The word tables from the questionnaires were examined and analyzed by the researcher, and it was determined correlation existed between the participants' learning experiences and biographic backgrounds. According to the analysis of all word tables, conclusions were made based on the similarities gathered by the researcher. For credibility in this study, participants were encouraged with the use of the anonymous online survey. Also, by explaining that the participant could choose not to participate in the study or could withdraw from the study at any point, honesty was also encouraged by the researcher. Additionally, a reviewer was utilized to ensure credibility by refining the analysis from more than one perspective.

Assumptions

For this study, the researcher made assumptions that the design of the case study using the online survey allowed participants to give detailed responses. Also, the researcher made an assumption about the sample population and size. First, the researcher assumed American students who took the blended Korean language courses at the Osan LTD compared their experiences of learning in a blended environment to learning in a face-to-face classroom. Secondly, the researcher assumed that participants honestly

shared their perceptions of the effectiveness on language achievement and autonomous learning in a blended language course because they volunteered for the anonymous online survey. According to Morse and Richards (2002), the qualitative case study researcher should think qualitatively and work inductively because qualitative analysis frequently challenges assumptions and the obvious as well as reveals the hidden and the overt. Therefore, the researcher's open-mind is important to allow any hypotheses to develop over time along with other questions and answers.

Limitations

The researcher was aware of the limitations of this study because of the sample size and the case study methodology. Generalization of the case study results was difficult due to the small size and similar population of participants. Since Osan LTD offers Korean language courses to only American Air Force students, the sample population was a limitation. Another limitation was the potential bias because the researcher and participants were from the same LTD. Since the researcher taught the participants and was familiar with their attitudes or motivation towards studying the Korean language, reporting of the researcher about the students' perceptions might include bias. According to Creswell (2009), since researchers have their own prejudiced ideas about their studies, acknowledgement about bias and reduction of the impact are important. Also, validity can be considered a potential threat, but a reviewer audited this study to avoid possible bias and subjectivity. The researcher provided the study information to participants via email before they took the survey for transparency and credibility of the research process. The awareness of the researcher's bias and the feedback of the reviewer helped to mitigate these limitations.

Delimitations

The delimitations of data were also considered as limitations. First, students from only one LTD of DLIFLC were sampled. However, since Osan LTD is the only LTD providing students with blended language instruction combined with the LMS, *SAKAI*, the researcher believed that delimitation occurred naturally for this exploratory case study. Secondly, the sample size for this case study was small. Only 10 participants were selected for this study to collect in-depth data. This in-depth data provided more accurate credentials of common themes. Therefore, the collected data from the small sample served as a delimitation. Finally, the findings of this case study did not generalize because this is an exploratory case study. However, exploratory study can identify themes and hypotheses for a future study. Therefore, this delimitation can be the limitation of this case study, but can change the scope and intent of this investigation.

Ethical Assurances

The researcher prepared the Institutional Review Board (IRB) application and obtained approval for data collection from Northcentral University. Participants received an explanatory email about the purpose of the study and the survey process, as well as a consent form. The informed consent form was placed on the first page of the online survey, but did not require the participants' signatures because they were to answer anonymously for this study. The consent form stated that the participant was a volunteer, informed them of their right to refuse to answer the questions and withdraw from the study, as well as the confidentiality of their responses. Before the survey was conducted, participants were encouraged to ask any questions about the study by phone or e-mail at any time. In order to protect the participants' identities and confidentiality, the researcher

used an anonymous online survey, and the collected data were coded and locked in a computer file with a password. All collected data for the study will be maintained during the required number of years based on the federal law and after that the data will be properly discarded.

Based on the four categories of ethical principles, participants were protected from harm, reviewed the informed consent, and had the right to privacy and honesty. Participants' identities during the study were protected from harm and confidential, too. Also, this study posed minimal risk to the participants by avoiding possible psychological discomfort during the survey. All questions focused on the participants' perceptions of the phenomenon, and no questions asked them to admit any academic dishonesty.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative method was to discover the student perceptions toward the effectiveness of the blended Korean language course on student language achievement and autonomous learning. The questions explored whether students perceive their language skills and autonomous learning skills improve more in a blended Korean language course than in a face-to-face course, what factors students perceive improve or hinder their language skills in a blended Korean language course, and how to develop a more effective blended language curriculum for student success. Participants are American students who took the blended Korean language course between 2014-2016 at the Osan LTD, DLIFLC in Korea. Based on the students' language proficiency levels, representative sample students who participated in intermediate and advanced courses were invited for the anonymous online survey. To identify the effective factors of a blended language curriculum, their perspectives were collected by using an open-ended

questionnaire. The results were analyzed by content analysis. The limited number of participants and the researcher's bias were limitations because findings from this case study were difficult to be generalized. The collected data from the small size were delimitations, but since this case study is exploratory, it can transform the scope and intent of this investigation. Based on the ethical principles, participants and their responses were protected from harm and remained confidential.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the data collected from American students about their perceptions of course effectiveness factors for language achievement and learner autonomy in a blended Korean language course at Osan LTD, DLIFLC. For this study, data were gathered from a qualitative questionnaire through the online platform Survey Monkey. IRB was approved prior to collection of any data, and informed consent was included in the survey. The questionnaire was designed to accumulate basic demographic data and blended Korean language learning experiences from the students who took such courses in Osan LTD, DLIFLC. The questionnaire was open-ended and anonymous.

Based on the researcher's reserved student email list, 43 out of the 73 students who took intermediate and advanced blended Korean language courses between 2014 and 2016 received an invitation letter via personal email explaining the purpose of study and a consent form. 16 out of 43 students voluntarily answered the questionnaire through Survey Monkey. Since 10 people for a phenomenology case study is recommended (Patton, 2001), the researcher selected 10 respondents based on their Defense Language Proficiency Test in Korean (DLPT) scores and separated them into two groups, advanced (3/3) and intermediate levels (under 3/3). Data were gathered anonymously, and the collected personal information was coded for confidentiality, categorized into themes, and organized into tables and figures to simplify the results. Chapter 4 provides the results of the data analysis, the evaluation of the findings, and a summary of the chapter. The data analysis reports the demographic information and developing themes resulting from the main five questions and other participant-provided concerns or suggestions.

Results

The findings are focused upon the data from the questionnaire including Part I- Demographic information and Part II- Blended Korean language experiences. 10 respondents out of 16 survey participants were selected based on their Korean DLPT levels, and their data were combined in order to compare themes across all 10 participants' responses. Table 1 represents the Part I- demographic data of the 10 participants. The emerged themes from the Part II questionnaire were analyzed in the findings by comparing the two groups: the students possessing an intermediate-level of Korean language proficiency under 3/3 in the DLPT, and the students who have an advanced-level of Korean language proficiency over 3/3 in DLPT listening and reading, respectively.

Questionnaire Findings for Part I: Demographic Information. The Part I questionnaire including questions 1 through 8 was designed to collect basic demographics: family, education, Korean language proficiency, and blended learning background information. The analysis of this questionnaire was used to determine whether any connection existed between the participants with similar responses from the Part II questionnaire and their respective background. The participants for this study were 10 American students who took a blended Korean language course between 2014 and 2016. They were selected based on their most recent DLPT scores, consisting of five who had 3/3 and five who had under 3/3 in listening and reading on the DLPT. Participants' education levels ranged from some college credit to MA, but only three students including two female and one male student had experiences in blended learning at colleges. The age group was from 20 to 40, and 2 out of the 10 students were female. Six

were married with kids, and four students were single. These data were essential for both the evaluation of findings and for Chapter 5. Each participant's profile yielded from the Part I-questionnaire is outlined in Table 1, and the data of the profiles are discussed further in the evaluation of findings from the Part II questionnaire and in Chapter 5. Part II asked participants seven questions regarding blended Korean language learning experiences.

Table 1

Part I: Demographic Information

Participant #	Gender	Age	Marital	Education	DLPT	BL Experiences
S1	**M**	**36-40**	**MwK**	**BA**	**3/3**	**N**
S2	**M**	**31-35**	**MwK**	**MA**	**3/3**	**N**
S3	**M**	**36-40**	**S**	**AA**	**3/3**	**N**
S4	**M**	**31-35**	**MwK**	**BA**	**3/3**	**N**
S5	**F**	**31-35**	**MwK**	**BA**	**3/3**	**Y**
S6	**M**	**20-25**	**S**	**Credits**	**2/3**	**N**
S7	**F**	**31-35**	**S**	**BA**	**2/3**	**Y**
S8	**M**	**26-30**	**MwK**	**BA**	**3/2+**	**N**
S9	**M**	**26-30**	**MwK**	**BA**	**2/3**	**N**
S10	**M**	**36-40**	**S**	**BA**	**2/3**	**Y**

Questionnaire Findings for Part II: Blended Korean Language Learning.

Seven questions, 9 to 15 in the Part II questionnaire were developed to explore the five main research questions of this study. The unit of analysis was made up of the students'

perceptions of course effectiveness factors for language proficiency as well as learner autonomy in a blended Korean language course. In this section, information from each research question was classified by the major themes in order to compare themes across all 10 participants' perceptions. Common themes relating to predictors of effectiveness factors for language achievement and existing inconsistencies of autonomous learning were discovered.

Part II: Research Question 9: How do you perceive the effectiveness of language achievement in especially listening and reading skills in a blended Korean language course which is combined face-to-face class with *SAKAI*, Learning Management System (LMS)?

The response to the first question was designed to find out how they perceive the effectiveness of language achievement in a blended Korean language course. All 10 participants considered language achievement in a blended Korean language course effective for language learning, and one participant stated it was also effective for teaching. His reason for the effectiveness in teaching was that access via *SAKAI* provided the ability for the instructors to monitor activity, progress, and results without first returning to the classroom. The reasons provided for effectiveness of language achievement were that it gives students an opportunity to understand the content without the help of other students and instructors, exposes them to the target language, and reduces the crutch of dependency on English during language learning. Also, allowing students access to all available materials, being able to continue their study in a self-paced manner, and providing feedback and tailored techniques for studying were other elements that participants stated as effective aspects of the blended Korean language

course in improving listening and reading skills. In addition, two participants noted the blended Korean courses were intuitive and led them to successful autonomous learning.

Although all participants deemed the blended Korean language course for language achievement and teaching, some expressed concerns such as possible over-reliance on *SAKAI* use and their preference for face-to-face classes. These answers relate to Q14 asking for challenges and concerns regarding the course. One participant wrote, "It is beneficial for studying via *SAKAI*, but face-to-face classes are more beneficial." Another stated that although *SAKAI* can lower pressure by allowing students to spend some time in class at their own pace, overuse of *SAKAI* can lead to the learner to become bored as physically attending class becomes unnecessary.

Part II: Research Question 10: What factors do you perceive improve or hinder your listening and reading skills in a blended Korean language course?

When participants were asked about the factors that improved or hindered their skills during the course, improving factors were found to be (1) self-study time; (2) access to resources and materials through *SAKAI* and the exposure to those variations in grammar, reading, and audio-visual content; (3) immediate feedback; and (4) a discussion board to read other students' posts. Eight participants listed these factors, and among them, three stated that self-study time to understand the content at their own pace was a benefit of blended learning. Another three participants specified the accessibility of resources and exposure to language materials via *SAKAI* as a factor for improving, and the other two replied with the ability to enhance understanding of the passages through immediate online feedback.

Regarding the factors that hindered listening and reading skills, six participants provided the following four themes: (1) delay in cognitive processing; (2) relying on the students to do more work without an instructor present and unclear about certain nuances of languages; (3) insufficient time for reviewing the content materials; and (4) inconsistent access to the Internet. One participant stated delaying cognitive processing was the hindering factor, and he was an intermediate student who had 2/3 in listening and reading skills. Another participant stated a blended language course relied on students' work without an instructor present, and the other participant wrote, "There are uncertain nuances of language when using *SAKAI* but students can learn from a teacher directly."

Two students also stated the insufficient time or fast speed required for self-study review in a face-to-face classroom as a hindering factor. One commented, "Sometimes getting used to the speed can be difficult as well. If an individual's initial comprehension is low, it will make it more difficult since much of the language is built upon previous knowledge." As to the overall improving or hindering factors, one participant, an intermediate student with 2/3 in listening and reading skills, claimed, "I don't currently see any factors in getting me to learn Korean. Once I hit higher levels, I'm sure I'll be able to identify more factors that hinder my ability."

Part II: Research Question 11: How do you perceive the improvement of autonomous learning skills in a blended Korean language course?

Concerning the improvement of autonomous learning skills, 5 out of 10 participants answered clearly that the blended Korean language course improved them, with one stating it did so by using skills the student had learned in the basic course and applying new skills from the autonomous course. Another respondent noted the blended

Korean course helped to develop certain techniques and refine the learning procedures for test preparation. Also, two respondents commented that having use of an online tool was helpful during the class for tasks such as finding articles and receiving feedback. However, they added they were not self-driven learners and stopped looking for articles after completing the course. Three out of the five participants who stated it was effective for autonomous learning were intermediate-level students who received 2/3 or 3/2+ in listening and reading skills, while two participants were advanced-level students who received 3/3.

Six participants responded that the improvement of autonomous learning skills in the blended Korean language course depended on elements of the learning process such as curriculum, variety of activities, instructors, and students' motivation and styles. Regarding the scheduling of those activities, one respondent commented, "A blended learning environment can achieve efficiencies by moving activities like vocabulary drills into the autonomous learning portions of overall coursework while leaving more classroom time for discussion and debate." One participant also stated although the blended course helped his own autonomous learning skill, improvement depends on an individual's motivation and preferred learning style. Another emphasized the responsibility of the individual studying the material. One participant highlighted the curriculum for securing results, while two others stated it depends on the instructor. Of those two, one said if instructors assign only an amount of work that can be fully reviewed, autonomy would be improved. However, one respondent did not think autonomous skills were improved because the use of *SAKAI* made little difference in autonomy other than providing easily accessible material.

Part II: Research Question 12: What factors do you perceive improve or hinder your autonomous learning skills in a blended Korean language course?

Regarding autonomy improvement, five participants emphasized the importance of autonomous study sessions which allowed students to utilize free time outside of class to build on their learning by reviewing the content. This helped them tailor their language acquisition study time to their individual learning styles. Two others pointed to the online tools and ease of access to the material as improving factors. Another participant stated the refinement of study habits and being shown deliberate techniques for retention and practice such as the "learn to learn process" were helpful for autonomous learning. The final factor given for improvement was the instructor's understanding of students' needs for reaching their goals. One student stated, "The greatest importance is the teachers' understanding of what skills the student needs to improve upon so that they can formulate an appropriate plan for them to accomplish their goals of improvement." However, one participant commented that although research assignments and speeches designed to encourage autonomous learning were helpful to improve content knowledge and confidence, he did not believe those activities improved language maintenance.

Regarding factors that hinder the improvement of autonomous learning skills, two participants pointed to the lack of instructor presence outside the classroom as having a negative impact on understanding, leading them to rely on face-to-face classroom interaction for learning. On the other hand, one participant indicated other classmates' negative attitudes toward autonomous learning were a hindering factor. In addition, one student commented that the lack of social interaction in autonomous study fails to force

introverted learners to devote effort to mastering essential skillsets such as conversational speaking.

Part II: Research Question 13: How do you perceive the effective blended language curriculum for success of language learning?

Regarding blended language curriculum effectiveness for successful language learning, 9 of the 10 participants agreed the blended course was beneficial to learning and the curriculum was relevant and modern, with the tenth participant unsure of the effectiveness. One respondent said, "I adjusted the methodologies used to learn and received my first 3/3 ever using the blended techniques (2/2- 3/3)". Another participant stated, "The blended course is definitely beneficial to learning how to take your surrounding material and use it to build your Korean abilities." One participant commented on the merits of the blended learning system regarding its effectiveness, "Blended learning system allows the student access to materials outside of classroom hours and provides a lower pressure environment to practice certain skillsets."

However, though nine participants said the blended language curriculum for language learning success was effective, five of them indicated reservations in response to the next questions, 14 and 15, asking for concerns and suggestions. One participant said the curriculum was an approach appropriate for a test model, but the traditional face-to-face student-teacher setting is more effective than the blended classroom, and more one-on-one time for speaking or general practice would need to be incorporated into blended learning. Another respondent suggested including a real-time chat function to the *SAKAI* and integrating chat into the curriculum for the benefit of additional speaking practice. Two participants highlighted the teacher's role in improving effectiveness

through efforts such as providing an accurate plan and uploading coursework for students. Also, the willingness of students to actively participate in their learning was emphasized for the success of language learning with the blended language curriculum.

Part II: Research Question 14: What challenges or concerns do you have regarding the blended Korean language course?

Eight participants responded with challenges or concerns taken from the course, and some answers blended with question 15 asking for suggestions to improve the course. Their concerns are categorized into five items: (1) students' lack of understanding of all critical content; (2) necessity of tailored material for individual students based on different needs and learning types; (3) burden of too many additional assignments intended to improve weak areas; (4) difficulty using new technologies; and (5) large amount of work accomplished without an instructor. Regarding students' lack of understanding, one participant commented, "Students may not fully understand all the critical content. In a classroom setting, the teacher can usually gauge whether or not a student comprehends the material, however, when autonomously learning, they may feel apprehensive to speak up. That's why I feel ample review time for autonomous assignments is critical."

As to the concern of needing tailored materials for individual students, one participant shared his experience and suggested, "Ensuring that every individual is receiving the course material well is difficult. Every person has a different set of needs or a way they learn most effectively. I would say that it's important to keep an open view on each individual and help tailor material to them based upon learning types. Make sure there are plenty of projects which engross all senses." Conversely, another participant

expressed concern that “Some students may be overloaded with additional assignments to improve their weaker areas which could cause undue stress and create more problems than it can solve.” About technology, one participant experienced trouble and suggested, “Using new websites can be frustrating, so making [sic] sure the beginning of the class has a through overview of all the features and how to use them.”

Four out of eight participants with concerns pointed to a lack of time with the instructor. Three of them were intermediate-level students who received under 3/3 in listening and reading, and the fourth, whose level was 3/3, expressed concern for comprehension in other students: “At lower levels students will probably not have enough time with the instructor. In my 2016 class, one of the classmates was in the advanced class, but not truly at an advanced-level, and I think too much of the work without an instructor was not grasped.” One of the lower level participants disclosed he had been unable to benefit fully from the previous course. Another said though he enjoyed working on the presentations, they ran the risk of taking up too much of the limited time students had with instructors during the course. The third lower level participant warned about the possibility for teachers to overuse the *SAKAI* program.

Part II: Research Question 15: Do you have any suggestions to improve language achievement and autonomous learning skills in the blended language learning environment?

In response to question 15, seven participants responded with answers that fit into three themes: (1) need for a self-study technique; (2) the addition of various program applications, a chat feature, and a writing composition element; and (3) adjusting the amount of work required outside of class. One participant shared his own method for

learning vocabulary, which was writing the Korean word and its definition in Korean. He claimed, “Using the self-study technique along with the course material provided I went from a 1+/2 to a 3/3.” Another participant suggested using a chat feature and other applications such as CL-150 and Beelingu, programs for studying vocabulary. He also recommended including a writing composition element for advanced classes.

As for adjusting the amount of work expected to be completed without an instructor, one participant insisted it be commensurate with the student’s ability. Another suggested reducing the number of presentations assigned to allow more time in class for other activities. However, he found most of the curriculum and exercises to be effective for learning. Lastly, one respondent provided no suggestions for improvement and instead remarked on the responsibility of the students to receive the benefits of the course, saying, “It provided the perfect environment for people to take advantage of their time if they were willing.”

Evaluation of Findings

To accurately identify the effectiveness of blended language learning, it was imperative to evaluate and identify the effectiveness factors for language achievement and autonomous learning in a blended Korean language curriculum. Literature has consistently shown blended learning has become more popular and practical in second language classrooms because online learning tools increase learning effectiveness and motivation and promotes self-regulated learning strategies for successful outcomes (Ting and Chao, 2013). Therefore, the research questions of this study were constructed to examine not only the effectiveness but also the improving and hindering factors of a blended Korean language course.

This research was conducted within the theoretical framework of sociocultural, constructivist, and metacognition theories. The three theories are interrelated, with the common final goal of enhancing learners' cognitive development and autonomy through social interaction and collaboration with scaffolding. A ubiquitous computing environment such as in online courses or blended learning courses, allows students and instructors to interact with each other on the Internet or via a mobile community. Teaching with technology can foster student learning by providing a social network, collaborative activities, and communication between learners and instructors.

This research studied students' perceptions of course effectiveness factors for language achievement and learner autonomy in a blended Korean language course of face-to-face teaching integrated with *SAKAI*, LMS, and the researcher found students perceived the course to be effective for language achievement in listening and reading skills. This finding supported the literature stating computer mediated communications (CMC) such as a learning management system have been found to increase students' linguistic development and success in using the target language through negotiations, collaborations, interactions, and communications (Dang & Robertson, 2010). All 10 survey participants answered the blended course was effective for language achievement, and one added it was also effective for language teaching. The results from this response were supportive of the literature-- the ubiquitous computing environment impacts both teaching and learning by providing both teachers and students with new ways of constructing, representing, and sharing knowledge (Kratcoski, Swan, and Campbell, 2006).

Three major themes for improving language achievement were found from this research: (1) self-review time, (2) access to various resources, and (3) constant feedback. The first factor for improvement in a blended language course is to give students an opportunity to ensure they understand the content during self-review hours in a self-paced manner. The self-review hour is important according to constructivist theory which advises helping students control their own learning, use critical thinking skills for problem solving, and construct new knowledge based on previous experiences, as well as emphasizes social interaction and collaboration (Li, 2012; Schwieter, 2010). According to metacognition theory, which is closely related to constructivist theory, learners have to be conscious of and monitor their own thinking in order to construct knowledge (Joyce et al., 2008). In other words, self-review time in the blended language course helps high-level metacognitive learners to not only promote successful knowledge acquisition by monitoring their own thinking and constructing knowledge but also to become self-regulated learners.

The second factor for improving language achievement found in the research is to help students access various resources through *SAKAI* such as grammar, vocabulary, listening, and reading materials. This finding was in support of the research, in which Grgurovic (2011) found the use of LMS technology improved the students' connection between class work and online work, and the teacher believed that working on online materials allowed students to have more individualized instruction and control their own learning level. A blended learning course with an LMS allows students to learn anytime and anywhere, provides access to the learning materials after class, and enhances online interactions between instructor and student or student and student (McLaren, 2011; Poon,

2013). In addition, students can access assignments, grades, and course information easily (Wanda, 2009). Most beneficial, the use of LMS tools created a learner-centered and online collaborative environment by helping students engage with the course material more frequently compared to a traditional class. An LMS provides great security and privacy, creates social networks, and makes material available outside of the classroom and class hours (Harrington et al., 2006).

The third improving factor for language achievement is to provide the ability to enhance understanding of assigned work through feedback. Three participants stated receiving immediate feedback helped their understanding of the content. This supported the literature of Bigatel et al. (2012), which found social interaction in an online community to be a crucial factor in student success by increasing understanding and retention of content. Wanda (2009) also found LMSs helpful in providing constant feedback and course information to students. One survey participant from this research stated that reading other students' posts each night helped him to learn from the other students. According to Garcia-Sanchez (2016), ubiquitous learning environment helped English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners build knowledge and use their metacognitive communicative skills through interactive discussion forums and in online space. Also, Sardegna and Dugartsyrenova (2014) found asynchronous discussion forums, blogs, and wikis enhance the process of knowledge sharing and help students monitor and facilitate the critical thinking, self-reflection, and self-evaluation processes. In particular, the LMS's discussion board was found to help students understand course concepts and appreciate their classmates' views and opinions by sharing their experiences and knowledge (Wanda, 2009). In a foreign language course, an LMS was found to

improve students' listening and reading skills as well as speaking, grammar, writing, and pronunciation skills. Through interaction with their peers and instructor on the discussion board, students learn about various registers and the appropriateness of language constructions in different contexts (Alberth, 2013; Godwin-Jones, 2011; Grgurovic, 2011).

On the other hand, there are hindering factors for language achievement in the blended language course as well. The first from the research findings is delaying the cognitive process. This aligned with Bigatel et al. (2012) who found reducing the traditional face-to-face time in a blended course led to the loss of potential teachable moments such as cognitive opportunities for higher-level knowledge acquisition and deeper thinking and processing. Burk (2013) said although online tools and applications may encourage students' multi-tasking in learning, the learners' intrinsic motivation, culture, social class, and cognitive processes will influence their learning regardless of the instructional tools.

The second hindering factor is poor learning skills that would otherwise allow the full advantage of online learning. One participant of this study pointed to relying on the student to do more work without an instructor present as a hindrance. This finding was in agreement with Poon (2013), who found some students had difficulty accepting responsibility for their own learning and felt isolated from the social interaction provided in a face-to-face classroom environment. Another participant of the research survey stated, "Students may not understand certain nuances of language when using *SAKAI* whereas they can learn them from a teacher directly." Additionally, lack of support for course design relating to the online community, discussion forums, and student

management tools as well as instructors' and students' perceived value of an LMS and their previous experience with technology can have an impact on the usage of the LMS and student satisfaction (Sardegna & Dugartsyrenova, 2014).

In regards to other hindering factors, two participants noted insufficient time for reviewing self-study content within the blended course schedule. Therefore, Bigatel et al. (2012) emphasized the quality of the online learning experience for learner success in a ubiquitous online learning environment. Finally, inconsistent and unreliable access to the Internet is found to be a hindrance to language achievement. This is congruent with Tanveer (2011) who found unreliable technology and electronic assessments can be challenges in online education.

Regarding blended learning and language achievement, Soliman (2014) also studied the correlation between using technology in the language classroom and achievement in English language proficiency, and found both the students' language proficiency and independent learning skills were increased when online learning supplemented the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) face-to-face classroom. Furthermore, many researchers have found that online learning has enhanced learner outcomes and autonomous learning by increasing motivation, interaction, collaboration, and transformation of information (Banditvilai, 2016). However, concerning the increase of independent learning skills, this research did not fully demonstrate it because only 5 out of 10 participants perceived the blended Korean language course improved their autonomous learning skills, and the other half said improvement was dependent on elements of the learning process such as curriculum, activities, instructors, and students' motivation and learning styles. This finding is in support with Vygotsky's theory, which

explains students are not independent from their learning context, and their learning is influenced through their ZPD by communicating and sharing action in origin and cognitive language learning (Bashir-Ali, 2011).

The five participants who answered that the blended Korean course improved autonomous learning skill stated they did so by using previously acquired skills in the blended course, and were able to develop learning techniques and refine the learning procedures by using online tools. This statement supports the constructivist theory, which emphasizes learners internalize knowledge taken from their own experiences (Li, 2012). Also, these findings indicate that a well-planned online curriculum can enhance students' constructivist learning by ensuring access to authentic materials and providing interaction with the instructors, and can promote learner autonomy by helping students learn how to study. Learning how to study leads to becoming a self-regulated learner (Kaur & Kaur Sidhu, 2010). In order to become self-regulated, learners should be aware of their own process. Students with metacognitive awareness can decide their own learning strategies and choose resources as well as review their progress, accomplishments, and future learning directions (Brook, 2013). High proficiency learners are assumed to be more aware of autonomous learning, but this research found that three out of the five participants who perceived an improvement in their autonomous learning skills were intermediate-level students. In other words, this supports Mohamadpour (2013) who found that high proficiency learners are not necessarily more aware of autonomous learning than low proficiency learners.

Self-regulated learning requires three general aspects of academic learning: behavior, motivation, and cognition, but the learner's participation is critical in the

learning process (Ting & Chao, 2013). The findings from this research identified 6 out of 10 participants similarly stated the improvement of autonomous learning skills in the blended Korean language course depended on factors such as curriculum, variety of activities, and instructors, as well as individual students' motivation and learning styles. Dang and Robertson (2010) also found the level of effects on each student varied due to the different interpretations of learning, online habits, and lack of confidence in managing their own learning even if the LMS component was found to support students with initiating, monitoring, and evaluating their learning to improve learner autonomy. Additionally, Godwin-Jones (2011) and Mohamadpour (2013) found students can understand and manage their own learning when they possess high motivation and self-efficacy because language learning autonomy requires learning strategies, motivation, cooperative learning, and language proficiency.

As to the factors that improved autonomous learning skills in a blended Korean language course, the first was the importance of autonomous study sessions. According to Joyce et al. (2008), learners who have high-level metacognitive processes can become self-regulated learners, and self-regulation can promote learners' successful knowledge acquisition. Therefore, through an autonomous study session using an LMS in conjunction with scaffolding, learners can enhance their metacognition and self-regulation skills. By monitoring, planning, organizing, controlling, and evaluating their own learning for the development of metacognition, learners can determine their objectives, define content and progression, select methods and techniques to be used, monitor the procedures of acquisition, and evaluate what has been acquired (Balcikanli, 2010).

The second improving factor was the online tools and ease of access to the material. This finding was supportive of the literature, which indicated in second language learning, LMS tools such as weblog, discussion board, and instant messenger can contribute to students' linguistic development and their autonomy (Lai & Li, 2011). For example, a peer network accessed through a discussion board tool in the LMS was found to help students reflect on their own ideas and develop learner autonomy (Godwin-Jones, 2011). According to Dang & Robertson (2010), the LMS component supported students with initiating, monitoring, and evaluating their learning in EFL education. However, one survey participant expressed his concern about language maintenance despite acknowledging that research assignments and speeches were helpful to improve content knowledge and confidence as well as autonomous learning. This illustrates that this learner does not know how to construct their own knowledge and develop their metacognitive strategies for the attainment of successful language learning. Unal (2010) emphasized learning environments should include social interaction, collaboration, and scaffolding to enhance student learning and learner autonomy, and most of all, instructors should help students become self-regulated and responsible for their own learning.

As a hindering factor for the improvement of autonomous learning skills, the reduced instructor presence in the blended language course was brought up by one participant in this study. He stated, "Lack of instructor presence during outside the classroom sometimes left me with questions that couldn't be helped immediately leading to an increased chance of missing the objective." For effective and successful learning outcomes and autonomous learning, the active roles of both instructors and students are critical. This finding supported the literature, which indicated only students who have

intrinsic motivation and metacognitive strategies can construct their own knowledge and become autonomous learners, and instructors who are not autonomous language learners themselves may negatively impact the development of learner autonomy (Unal, 2010). For the development of learners' autonomous learning skills, instructors need to develop their own metacognition for blended teaching pedagogies to provide students with effective modeling examples and learning environments.

Regarding the effectiveness of successful language learning in the blended Korean language course, 9 out of 10 participants answered that it was effective and beneficial to language learning, and one participant said he was not sure about its effectiveness. Two participants gave the reason for effectiveness as its allowing student's access to materials outside of classroom hours and the success in building Korean language skills. This finding concurred with Yu, Sun, and Chang (2010) who also examined teachers' and students' LMS experiences about language teaching and learning, and discovered all participants generally had a positive attitude towards the use of the LMS because it provides collaborative learning and convenient access to course materials and language resources. However, the findings from this question also indicated the LMS was not specifically designed for language learning and teaching. Five out of nine participants expressed their concerns about the lack of traditional face-to-face student-teacher settings such as one-on-one speaking practice or a real-time chat function. Therefore, the findings support the literature which emphasized academic institutions' support system for the development of LMS design for language teaching and learning is necessary to minimize the disadvantages of blended language courses (Yu, Sun, and Chang, 2010).

In addition, two participants mentioned the importance of the teacher's role to improve the effectiveness of a blended curriculum, such as providing a study plan and uploading coursework for students. The finding was in support of Chang (2008), who found faculty needs to have digital competence with tools such as forums, chats, and portfolios. When instructors are less technologically adapted and less familiar with the LMS, students who do not have the time and motivation to learn to use it showed a lack of engagement with it (George-Walker et al., 2010). Furthermore, one participant commented that the success of language learning with the blended language curriculum depends on the willingness of students. This finding is in support of the literature in which Grgurovic (2011) indicated both teachers and students need to learn new technology to use an LMS, but most of all, students need to develop learner autonomy in the blended language learning environment (Grgurovic, 2011).

Regarding students' concerns or challenges posed in the blended Korean language course, one advanced participant expressed his concern about his lack of understanding the critical content. This finding is somewhat contradictory to the literature, which found students' understanding of subjective learning in the blended learning environment had improved when compared to traditional face-to-face or fully-online courses (Owston et al., 2013). In the literature, students perceived that their conceptions and responsibility of learning in the online environment influenced their achievement though instructors found there was no significant difference in test results.

Another concern is the necessity of tailored material for individual students. According to Grgurovic (2011), online materials in the blended learning class improved integration and interaction by using an LMS, and students responded that they were able

to see the connection between class work and online work. George-Walker, Hafeez-Baig, and Danaher (2010) also found that the blended learning environment provided them with a rich learning context and problem-based learning (PBL) experience as well as fostered greater learner engagement. Another concern is excessive additional assignments for weak areas and too much work to be completed without an instructor. This result aligned with the findings of Poon (2013), who discovered similar challenges for students such as isolated feelings, expectations of less class work, and lack of time management skills and responsibility for personal learning because social interaction was reduced from that in a face-to-face classroom. Mostly lower level participants who received under 3/3 in listening and reading, expressed they do not have enough time with the instructor in the blended Korean language course. Owston et al. (2013) found students' maturity resulted in a high degree of self-regulation, motivation, and positive thinking about blended learning.

The final challenge surveyed is using new technology systems such the LMS, *SAKAI*. This finding aligned with Grgurovic (2011), who found technology issues such as poor internet connections and lack of support for course design can be challenges to both students and teachers. Problems including lack of time and new technology concerns can lead both faculty and students to feel overwhelmed and tired (Poon, 2013). Participants also suggested the improvement of self-study techniques, reduction of workload, and introduction of a chat feature, other applications, and a writing composition element. For a successful blended learning environment, McLaren (2011) suggested the blended curriculum should be reviewed and adjusted, technical ability improved, and most of all, faculty should put more commitment and enthusiasm into a course.

Summary

In this chapter 4, the findings of students' perceptions about effectiveness factors for language achievement and learner autonomy in a blended language course were presented based on the analysis of collected data from the students who participated in the blended Korean language courses at Osan LTD, DLIFLC. For this study, a qualitative questionnaire was conducted anonymously online through Survey Monkey. IRB was approved prior to collection of any data, and informed consent was included in the online survey.

The questionnaire was designed with two parts including basic demographic data and blended Korean language learning experiences. Based on the researcher's reserved student email list, 43 out of 73 students who took intermediate and advanced blended Korean language courses between 2014 and 2016 received an invitation letter via personal email explaining the purpose of study and consent form, and 16 out of the 43 voluntarily participated in the questionnaire online. Following Patton's (2001) recommendation for conducting a phenomenology case study, 10 respondents were selected based on two groups of Korean DLPT results, advanced (3/3) and intermediate levels (below 3/3). The collected personal information was coded for confidentiality, categorized into themes, and organized into tables and figures to simplify the results. The data analysis reports the demographic information and developing themes in association with the main five questions and other concerns or suggestions.

The Part I questionnaire included eight questions numbered 1 to 8, and collected basic demographics-- family, education, Korean language proficiency, and blended learning background information. The analysis of this questionnaire was used to

determine whether any connection existed between the participants with similar responses from Part II and their respective backgrounds. All participants had obtained at least college credits or above including AA, BA, and MA degrees, but only three students, two female and one male, had experiences in blended learning at colleges. Their age group was 20 to 40, and 2 out of 10 were female. Six out of ten students were married with kids, and four were single.

The Part II questionnaire included seven questions numbered 9 to 15, and were developed to explore the five main research questions asking for the students' perceptions of effectiveness factors for language proficiency and learner autonomy in a blended Korean language course. Regarding language achievement in a blended Korean language course, all 10 participants expressed that it was effective for language learning, and one participant stated it was also effective for teaching because instructors can monitor activity, progress, and results without going to the classroom. The other reasons given for the effectiveness of language achievement were (1) providing students an opportunity to understand the content by themselves; (2) exposing students to the target language; (3) reducing English during language learning; (4) allowing students to access all materials in a self-paced manner; and (5) providing feedback and tailored techniques for studying. Eight respondents listed additional factors for improving listening and reading skills: self-study time; access to resources and materials through *SAKA;* exposure to variations in grammar, reading, and audio-visual content; immediate feedback; and the discussion board to read other students' posts. Regarding the hindering factors for listening and reading skills, the following five themes were found: (1) insufficient time for reviewing the content materials, (2) relying on the students to do more work without an instructor

present, (3) unclear nuances in language when using *SAKAI* for self-study, (4) unreliable Internet, and (5) delay in cognitive processing.

As to the improvement of autonomous learning skills in a blended Korean language course, 5 out of 10 participants answered that the blended Korean language course clearly improved autonomous learning skills, but most of them did not think they were self-driven learners. Three out of the five who stated it was effective for autonomous learning were intermediate-level students who received 2/3 or 3/2+ in listening and reading skills, and two participants were advanced-level students who received 3/3. Conversely, six participants responded that the improvement of autonomous learning skills in the course was dependent on elements of the learning process such as curriculum, variety of activities, instructors, and students' motivation and styles. To improve students' autonomous learning skills, the following factors were found: (1) autonomous study sessions, (2) online tools and ease of access to the materials, (3) the learn to learn process; and (4) the instructor's awareness of students' needs in reaching their goals. As hindering factors for the improvement of autonomous learning skills, no instructor presence outside the classroom and other classmates' negative attitudes toward autonomous learning were also discovered in this study. Regarding the effective blended language curriculum for success of language learning, 9 out of 10 participants agreed the blended course was effective and beneficial to learning, but one participant remained unsure.

Although most participants stated the blended language curriculum for language learning success was effective, there are some challenges and concerns to be addressed including (1) over-reliance of *SAKAI* use, (2) preference of face-to-face classes, (3)

students' lack of understanding of critical content, (4) necessity of tailored material for individual students, (5) excessive additional assignments, (6) using new technologies, and (7) too much work completed without an instructor. Participants suggested the following regarding the improvement of language achievement and autonomous learning skills: (1) to provide students with self-study techniques; (2) to introduce a chat feature, other applications, and a writing composition element; and (3) to reduce the amount of coursework. In addition, the teachers' and students' roles were emphasized to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning in the blended environment.

Chapter 5: Implications, Recommendations, and Conclusions

The use of blended approaches combining online activities with face-to-face instruction has increased in recent years and has become more common than either face-to-face or entirely online courses because the combination supplements deficiencies in face-to-face instruction that can serve each student's needs (Crawford, Barker, & Seyam, 2014; Ryan et al., 2016). In a foreign language course, the use of an LMS was found to improve students' language skills in listening, reading, speaking, writing, grammar, and pronunciation through interaction with peers and instructors, with autonomous learning skills improved as well (Alberth, 2013; Godwin-Jones, 2011; Grgurovic, 2011).

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the perceptions of students in regard to course effectiveness factors and challenges for language achievement and learner autonomy in a blended Korean language course. The problem addressed through this study was that low language skills seem to be related to a lack of autonomous learning skills based on similarities in attitude, competency, and learning behavior issues in students that struggle with both (Tassinari, 2012). Students' perceptions on blended Korean language courses regarding language achievement and autonomous learning skills have not been previously identified. Filling this gap by determining the factors that improve and hider skills may allow foreign language educators to better plan blended language curricula and increase student learning outcomes.

To identify effective and hindering factors that contributed to the language achievement and autonomous learning of American students who studied the Korean language, a qualitative case study design was used. In order to achieve the study's

purpose, deliberate sampling was utilized to select 10 students among the survey participants who had taken an intermediate or advanced class between 2014 and 2016 at the Osan LTD, DLIFLC in Korea. The anonymous, open-ended survey was conducted online using Survey Monkey, and all eligible participants had received an explanatory email invitation to take the research survey. The collected data was then examined, compared, and categorized into themes.

This qualitative case study was limited in the overall design because such studies exposed to researcher bias and the case-study methodology is used not to confirm but to understand a phenomenon (Yin, 2009). The study was also limited by the small sample size and similar population of those who participated in the survey—10 United States Air Force linguists. Generalization of this case study's results was difficult because of those limitations. Lastly, because the researcher taught the participants and was familiar with their attitudes or motivation towards studying the Korean language within the blended language course, this study may have been limited due to the researcher's bias.

Because human subjects were used in this study, the researcher obtained approval for data collection from Northcentral University's IRB, and all participants received an explanatory email about the purpose of the study and the survey process, as well as a consent form. The informed consent form stated that the participant was a volunteer, could refuse to answer the questions and withdraw from the study, and that responses would be confidential. In order to protect the participants' identities and ensure the privacy of their answers, the online survey was conducted anonymously, with the collected data coded and password-locked in a private computer file. The findings and results were presented in Chapter 4, and the remainder of this Chapter 5 includes analysis

of the implications of this study, the recommendations for its practical application, and concluding thoughts.

Implications

The results of this study and their relevance in terms of practical utility within blended foreign language education will be considered in this chapter. Additionally, the significance of this study's findings as well as the problem and purpose of this study will be reviewed. This section will summarize the findings related to Questions 9 to 15 in Part II questionnaire.

Part II: Research Question 9: How do you perceive the effectiveness of language achievement in especially listening and reading skills in a blended Korean language course which is combined face-to-face class with SAKAI, Learning Management System (LMS)?

All 10 participants of both intermediate and advanced-levels considered the blended Korean language course effective for language achievement, especially in listening and reading skills, and one participant stated it was also effective for teaching. According to that respondent, the reason was that teachers can monitor activity, progress, and results without returning to the classroom by accessing *SAKAI*. This finding is significant because it showed the blended course was perceived to have influenced teaching methodology, thus corroborating current literature that indicates the ubiquitous computing environment impacted both teaching and learning with new ways of constructing, representing, and sharing knowledge (Kratcoski, Swan, and Campbell, 2006).

Three participants explained that the course was effective for language achievement in that it gave students an opportunity to analyze the content during an autonomous study hour without the help of other students and instructors. Two of the three were intermediate-level students who had scores below 3/3 on DLPT. Through the autonomous learning hour, they were able to control their own learning, use critical thinking skills for problem solving, and construct new knowledge. This finding is significant because it revealed that learners who are conscious of their own learning can monitor their thinking and construct knowledge though they do not have high proficiency language skills (Joyce et al., 2008).

Another reason given for the effectiveness was having access to all target language materials via *SAKAI* and being able to reduce dependency on English during language learning by using the provided target language materials. This conclusion concurs with the research of Grgurovic (2011), which found the use of LMS technology improved the connection between class work and online work and allowed students to learn anytime and anywhere by providing access to the learning materials after class. Easy access to assignments, grades, and course information through the LMS tools creates a learner-centered and collaborative environment which allows students to engage with the course material more frequently compared to a traditional class (Wanda, 2009).

The third main reason for language achievement effectiveness in a blended language course was the ability to enhance one's understanding of the passages through immediate feedback. Three participants said immediate feedback helped to reinforce their understanding of the content. This finding is significant because it supports the assertion that social interaction in an online community can increase the understanding and

retention of content learned in class (Bigatel et al., 2012). This also supports the current literature, in which Wanda (2009) found use of an LMS to be helpful in providing constant feedback and course information to students.

One survey participant stated that reading other students' posts helped him to learn more reviewing how other students understood the content. This is important because it backs the literature which shows interactive discussion forums help students build knowledge and their metacognitive communication skills, improve their understanding of course concepts, and appreciate their classmates' views and opinions through the sharing of experiences and knowledge (Garcia-Sanchez, 2016; Wanda, 2009). Sardegna and Dugartsyrenova (2014) also found that asynchronous discussion forums, blogs, and wikis enhanced the processes of knowledge sharing, critical thinking, self-reflection, and self-evaluation. Literature on the subject is saturated with examples of the significance of social interaction with peers and instructors on the discussion board, which has been shown to improve language skills, increase knowledge of various registers, and guide the appropriateness of language construction in different contexts (Alberth, 2013; Godwin-Jones, 2011; Grgurovic, 2011).

All survey participants agreed on the effectiveness of the blended Korean language course for language achievement for reasons such as autonomous learning hours, easy access to language materials, immediate feedback, and the use of discussion boards. However, some showed concerns of over relying too heavily on *SAKAI* and disclosed a preference for face-to-face classes. As such, this finding may be limited in its scope due to the small number of participants and the nature of different learning

preferences. Challenges and concerns regarding blended language learning were discussed directly in Question 14.

Part II: Research Question 10: What factors do you perceive improve or hinder your listening and reading skills in a blended Korean language course?

With respect to the factors that improved listening and reading skills in a blended Korean language course, eight participants gave four main factors including self-study time, easy access to resources and materials, immediate feedback, and the *SAKAI* discussion board. This finding overlapped with the effectiveness reasons obtained from Question 9, but respondents provided different answers to each question.

Constructivist theory emphasizes that learners should internalize knowledge taken from their own experiences, and instructors should create a learner-centered and collaborative learning environment (Li, 2012). The finding from this study, in which participants stressed the importance of a self-review hour as an improving factor for language skills, supports the constructivist theory because learners can use critical thinking skills for problem solving and construct new knowledge by reviewing the content materials during autonomous learning hours. Also, it is supportive of metacognition theory, which asserts that learners should be conscious of and monitor their own thinking in order to construct knowledge (Joyce et al., 2008). As participants stated, student-centered, autonomous learning hours in a blended language course can improve not only language skills but also learners' metacognition and self-regulation skills.

Another improving factor taken from the survey is the easy access to resources and materials via *SAKAI.* This backs literature in which Pogany (2009) found expanded

use of the internet allows students to access information easily, and Yu, Sun, and Chang (2010) determined that the use of an LMS in a blended learning course enhanced teaching and learning performance. Wanda (2009) also found students had a positive view of using an LMS because it allowed them to access their assignments, grades, and information easily. The finding from this study supports the assessment that accessing resources and learning materials via an LMS can enhance students' language skills by providing more language materials and monitoring their learning process, which in turn can improve their learning autonomy (Sardegna & Dugartsyrenova, 2014).

Other improving factors for listening and reading skills are being able to receive immediate feedback and using discussion forums via *SAKAI*. Three participants stated the importance of feedback in helping them understand the content. The significance of this is that it showed social interaction in an online community to be a critical factor in student learning success (Bigatel et al., 2012). It is also supportive of literature that states both faculty and students have a positive view of the use of an LMS because faculty perceive the LMS helps to provide constant feedback and course information to students, and students perceive the LMS encourages student-faculty contact (Poon, 2013; Wanda, 2009). One survey participant emphasized the use of the discussion forum as important to learning from other students' perspectives or knowledge to improve one's own listening and reading skills. This finding supports the observation of Garcia-Sanchez (2016) that discussion forums in an online space can build learners' knowledge and enhance metacognitive communication skills through interactive discussion. Similarly, this finding showed support of literature which states that use of an LMS improved students' listening and reading skills through interaction with their peers and instructors on the

discussion board and also demonstrated the appropriateness of language construction in different contexts (Alberth, 2013; Godwin-Jones, 2011; Grgurovic, 2011). Wanda (2009), likewise, gave merit to the LMS's discussion board, stating it allows students to share their experiences and knowledge, and there they can appreciate their classmates' views and opinions.

Regarding hindrance to listening and reading skills, six participants replied with four themes which were a delay in cognitive processing, lack of autonomous learning skills, insufficient time for reviewing the materials, and Internet connectivity issues. An intermediate student pointed to the delay in cognitive processing as a barrier, and this is significant because it supports the finding of Bigatel et al. (2010) which showed that, by reducing the traditional face-to-face time, a blended course can cut down on opportunities to teach students cognitive skills for higher-level knowledge acquisition, deeper thinking, and processing. Burk (2013) placed emphasis on the influence that learners' cognitive processes have on their learning, regardless of instructional tools.

The second hindering factor identified was learners' lack of autonomous learning skills. This finding indicates that students rely on teachers inside and outside of the classroom, and they do not know how to study by using LMS tools or resources to solve problems. One participant stated, "Relying on the student to do more work without an instructor present would be the only hindrance I can identify." This finding supports the research of Poon (2013), who found that students had difficulty in accepting responsibility for their own learning. One intermediate-level participant noted, "I don't currently see any factors in getting me to learn Korean. Once I hit higher levels, I'm sure I'll be able to identify more factors that hinder my ability." According to Dang and

Robertson (2010) and Shamir (2013), learner autonomy is the ability to accept responsibility for one's own learning, and it is also a powerful tool in promoting a learner's successful attainment of knowledge. This finding highlights the necessity for learners to develop not only autonomous learning skills but also metacognitive awareness, which is the awareness of what one does or does not know (Unal, 2010).

The third factor found to hinder listening and reading skills was insufficient time for self-review of course materials. Although only two participants mentioned the lack of time in response to this question, it relates to the factor for improvement previously identified for language achievement, which was the necessity of autonomous learning hours for reviewing materials. One participant shared his concern about the speed of the course, explaining that falling behind early in language learning leads to continued difficulties. These responses back the research of Owston et al. (2013) which indicated providing face-to-face tutorials improved peer learning and alleviated students' concerns about not having enough time to review the materials by themselves. The final hindering factor was inconsistent access to the Internet, which was stated by one participant. This finding is supportive of the research of Tanyeer (2011), which also discovered dependence on electronic assessments and unreliable technology can be challenges in online education.

The improving factors for language achievement in a blended Korean language course-- self-study hour, easy access to materials, immediate feedback, and use of discussion boards-- and relevant findings from the literature were reviewed in this section. Those factors are related to the results of Question 9 regarding effectiveness reasons. It illustrates that although each participant answered Questions 9 and 10

differently, they mentioned the same themes and factors with respect to language skills in a blended Korean course. In other words, those factors played a significant role in enhancing learners' language achievement in a blended language course. Additionally, with regard to the hindering factors, delay in cognitive processing, lack of autonomous learning skills, insufficient time for review, and internet connectivity issues were analyzed here. Although these factors for improving and hindering learning are noteworthy, these findings may be limited in scope due to the small number of research survey participants. However, the results can help contribute to a better understanding of the improving and hindering factors students perceive as to course effectiveness.

Part II: Research Question 11: How do you perceive the improvement of autonomous learning skills in a blended Korean language course?

The results for Question 11 about the improvement of autonomous learning skills in a blended Korean language course were split into two themes. Five of the ten participants confirmed that the blended course noticeably improved students' autonomous learning skills. However, six participants, including one of those who acknowledged the improvement, responded that developing autonomous learning skills within the blended Korean language course depends on certain elements of the learning process.

The findings indicated three main themes of the reasons for improvement of autonomous language learning in a blended Korean language course. The first was that the course helped students apply old skills they had learned in previous courses in combination with the new skills, according to one respondent. This finding supports the constructivist theory, which emphasizes the construction of new knowledge based on

learners' previous experiences. As stated in constructivist theory, learners should internalize knowledge taken from their own experiences, and teachers should create learner-centered and collaborative environments to encourage students to control their own learning and use critical thinking skills for problem solving (Li, 2012). Thus the finding showed the blended Korean language course can improve students' autonomous language learning skills based on constructivist theory. That is, if provided a student-centered and collaborative environment, students may take from previous experiences to control their learning and use critical thinking skills.

Another reason offered by one participant was that the blended course helped him to develop certain studying techniques and refine his learning procedures for test preparation. This shows that the course helped learners to take responsibility of their learning as well as to initiate, monitor, and evaluate their own learning processes (Dang & Robertson, 2010). According to Kaur and Kaur Sidhu (2010), autonomous learners enthusiastically look for new knowledge and frequently engage with the cognitive, metacognitive, affective and social dimensions of the learning process.

Lastly, two participants commented that using online tools to find articles and receive feedback on them was helpful to improve autonomous learning skills during the course. This finding supports the literature in which Banditvilai (2016) found online learning has enhanced learner outcomes and autonomous skills by increasing motivation, interaction, collaboration, and transformation of information. Tanveer (2011) also observed online learning can help students become autonomous and confident learners by providing various activities and student-centered forms of learning.

On the other hand, six participants stated the improvement of autonomous learning skills in the blended Korean language course depends on learning process elements such as curriculum, activities, and instructors, as well as students' motivation and learning styles. This finding is in support of Ting and Chao (2013) who found self-regulated learning depends on the learner's participation in the education process. It showed that although the LMS component supports the improvement of learner autonomy, the level of effects it had on each student varied depending on the interpretation of learning, online habits, and lack of confidence in learning (Dang & Robertson, 2010).

Two of those six participants stated the improvement of autonomous learning skills depends on the instructor. This finding is important because it shows students may depend on the instructor's assistance more than their own autonomy, and that instructors play a vital role especially for students who have low-level metacognitive strategies within a blended language course (Unal, 2010). According to Godwin-Jones (2011) and Mohamadpour (2013), students can understand and manage their own learning when they have high motivation and self-efficacy because language learning autonomy requires them to develop learning strategies, motivation, cooperative learning, and language proficiency.

Of those who perceived the blended Korean language course improved autonomous learning skills, two were intermediate-level students, and three of the six participants who perceived improvement were dependent on learning process elements were advanced-level students. An intermediate-level participant admitted that although the use of online tools was helpful for building autonomous learning skills, he was simply

not a self-driven learner. An advanced-level participant similarly commented that it was useful for promoting autonomy when he found his own practice articles and received feedback on them, but stopped doing this after finishing the class. These disclosures from both class levels support the literature in which Mohamadpour (2013) found that high proficiency learners were not necessarily more aware of autonomous learning practices when compared to the low proficiency learners. In other words, it showed instructors should help students become self-regulated and responsible for their learning without depending heavily on instructors while encouraging them to improve their metacognitive strategies (Unal, 2010).

Part II: Research Question 12: What factors do you perceive improve or hinder your autonomous learning skills in a blended Korean language course?

Eight participants provided factors for improving autonomous learning skills in the blended Korean language course. Five among the eight emphasized the importance of self-study sessions during which students can take their time to build on procured knowledge by tailoring language acquisition study time to their individual learning needs. This finding is significant because Joyce et al. (2008) also found that learners who have high-level metacognitive processes can become self-regulated learners and promote successful knowledge acquisition. The use of LMS tools for scaffolding can enhance those metacognition and self-regulation skills. By monitoring the procedure of acquisition and through evaluating one's language acquisition success, learners can improve not only their language learning but also their autonomous learning skills (Balcikanli, 2010).

Two participants pointed to the use of online tools and easy access to the learning materials as improving factors for autonomous learning skills. This is notable because much of the literature has also emphasized the effectiveness of LMS tools for second language and autonomous learning. Lai and Li (2011) found using multiple resources such as the weblog, discussion board, and instant messenger of an LMS tools contributed to linguist development and learner autonomy. Also, Godwin-Jones (2011) discovered that a discussion tool helped students reflect on their ideas and develop learner autonomy.

Additionally, one participant in this study stated the "learn to learn process" was helpful for autonomous learning. This statement supports the literature in which Joyce, Weil & Calhoun (2008) urged learners should be aware of their own learning process because the most effective of them tend to be conscious of their learning in order to become self-regulated learners. Furthermore, this ability is dependent on the learner's participation in the learning process (Ting & Chao, 2013). Although one respondent stated activities such as research and speeches were helpful to improve content knowledge, confidence, and autonomous learning, he did not think it contributed to his language maintenance overall. This showed the learner lacked awareness of his language acquisition and autonomous language learning skills. Usually expert language learners who are highly motivated and self-efficient can manage their own autonomous language learning and succeed in using the language in real-life communication outside the classroom (Illés, 2012).

In regard to the hindering factors for building autonomous learning skills, three participants responded, and two of them expressed concern at the lack of instructor participation in blended courses, such as missing out on immediate feedback or guidance

for individual setbacks. Again, this finding shows students seem to depend on instructors and need improvement in constructing their own knowledge in order to become autonomous learners. Unal (2010) found instructors need to help develop learners' metacognition for blended autonomous learning and provide students with effective modeling examples and learning environments.

One participant identified the negative attitudes his classmates had toward autonomous learning as a hindering factor. This finding is substantial because it shows scaffolding through social interaction and collaboration is also important for the improvement of autonomous learning. Scaffolding is a mediator providing external support from the instructor, peers, experts, or tools, and it helps learners construct their knowledge (Schwieter, 2010). Therefore, the negative attitudes of peers toward autonomous learning can have an impact on other students' desire to improve autonomous learning skills. This also supports the research of Dang and Robertson (2010) which found the different interpretations of learning, online habits, and students' lack of confidence in learning can influence the effect of LMS benefits in blended language learning. Consideration of the improving and hindering factors for a blended language curriculum design will be able to increase course effectiveness and learner autonomy.

Part II: Research Question 13: How do you perceive the effective blended language curriculum for success of language learning?

The researcher asked survey participants about their perceptions of the effectiveness of the blended language curriculum for overall language learning success. Nine out of ten participants answered that the blended Korean language course was

effective and beneficial to language learning, and the curriculum was relevant and modern. Only one intermediate-level student said, “Not sure.” The reasons for effectiveness in language learning success were analyzed as three themes: (1) access to materials, (2) curriculum, and (3) autonomous study. These findings support the research of Yu, Sun, and Chang (2010) who found students generally had positive attitudes towards the use of an LMS because it provided them with convenient access to course materials and language resources. Garcia-Sanchez (2016) also found the use of technology in online courses has improved student learning, but emphasized the need for inclusion of metacognitive activities.

Online learning can help students become autonomous and confident learners and provide them with various student-centered activities, as well as foster intrinsic motivation, the interaction of introverted students, and time management skills. One participant suggested adding more interaction to the course through means such as including a real-time chat function in the *SAKAI* tools and integrating chat into the curriculum for additional speaking practice. Furthermore, for learner success, as one participant pointed out, the high quality of the online curriculum is critical and should be equal to or better than that of traditional classroom learning experiences (Bigatel et al., 2012). One participant submitted that the blended language curriculum was a good approach to be used as a test model, but the traditional face-to-face student-teacher setting was more effective. He also suggested more one-on-one time with the teacher for speaking or practicing weak areas. Additionally, two advanced-level participants stated although the blended language course was effective for successful language learning, some students require more time with instructors to develop a learning plan to follow for

improvements. This finding supports the research of Owston et al. (2013) which found students tend to develop more cohesive and critical reflections in face-to-face discussions. Also, this indicated that the LMS was not specifically designed for language learning and teaching. Therefore, according to Yu, Sun, and Chang (2010), academic institutions' support systems and the development of LMS design specifically for language teaching and learning is necessary to minimize the disadvantages of blended language courses.

Overall, the findings from Question 13 showed participants perceived the blended Korean language course was effective for successful language learning. However, they also stressed the significance of the quality of online learning experiences for success in a blended language learning environment. Elements to be considered include a well-planned blended curriculum, easily accessible materials, autonomous study sessions, instructor participation, and a focus on autonomous learning skills (Bigatel et al., 2012).

Part II: Research Question 14: What challenges or concerns do you have regarding the blended Korean language course?

Although most participants perceived the blended Korean language course was effective for language achievement in listening and reading skills and overall language learning, they expressed some challenges and concerns as well. Two among the eight participants that provided concerns responded about the lack of time with an instructor. One stated when students are unclear about critical content they need ample review time with an instructor prior to taking on autonomous assignments. This finding is critical because it suggests students prefer to have more face-to-face time with an instructor in order despite the existing literature that found the blended learning environment had

improved students' understanding of subjective learning when compared to traditional face-to-face or fully-online courses (Owston et al., 2013). As a result, it is vital for students to improve their autonomous learning skills, and accordingly, teachers need to develop activities or feedback to provide students with instruction to foster autonomous language learning.

The next concern was the different needs of each student which requires a different set of materials tailored to students' learning styles. Contrarily, another participant noted potential problems caused when some students become overloaded and stressed with additional assignments intended to improve their weaker areas. The findings support the research of Grgurovic (2011) which discovered online materials allowed students to have more individualized instruction and helped less attentive students control their learning levels. But the findings also showed some students had difficulty accepting responsibility for their own learning when they were assigned extra work for their weak areas (Poon, 2013). This research found mainly intermediate-level participants who received under 3/3 in listening and reading expressed discontent at the lack of time with an instructor in the blended Korean language course, and this finding coincides with the research of Owston et al. (2013) who indicated more mature students possessed a high degree of self-regulation, motivation, and positive thinking about blended learning.

The last main concern was about the use of the new technology system, *SAKAI*. One participant stated that using new websites can be frustrating, so he suggested a thorough overview of all its features and instruction on technology use at the beginning of the class. Although only one participant replied with this concern, this finding agreed with Grgurovic's (2011) which also found poor internet connections and lack of support

for course design can be challenges to both students and teachers. Poon (2013) also discovered technology concerns such as the need to acquire new skills for use in the online community, which can lead both faculty and students to feel overwhelmed and tired. Moreover, both instructors' and students' perceptions of an LMS and their previous experience with technology have an impact on the usage of the LMS and student satisfaction. Sardegna and Dugartsyrenova (2014) found the students who perceived online discussion as burdensome and time-consuming also felt collaborative tasks were purposeless and boring.

The discovered concerns and challenges from Question 14 are related to research Question 15 asking for suggestions for improvement, and the responses from both will contribute to improve the quality of blended language curricula and teaching.

Part II: Research Question 15: Do you have any suggestions to improve language achievement and autonomous learning skill in the blended language learning environment?

Seven participants made suggestions that fit into three themes autonomous learning techniques, additional elements for a blended language learning curriculum, and students' workload. First, regarding autonomous learning techniques, one participant emphasized the importance of developing individualized techniques and shared his successful language learning experience based on the use of provided course materials. He had had 1+/2 in Korean listening and reading skills on the DLPT, but after discovering his own learning strategies, he was able to earn 3/3. His strategy for vocabulary study was to use a Korean – Korean dictionary and write the meaning of each word in Korean of his own vocabulary list. Another participant also shared his learning

strategy for vocabulary study. His was to take vocabulary review quizzes that were not recorded in a grade, and to use learning activities based on his own learning style. Both participants who shared their learning strategies were advanced-level students. This demonstrates students with metacognitive awareness can choose their own learning strategies and resources, as well as review their progress, accomplishments, and future learning directions (Brook, 2013). Also, it supports the research of Ting and Chao (2013) who found self-regulated learning is the key to successful learning in school and beyond.

Additionally, two participants suggested adding features or activities to the blended language curriculum such as more vocabulary quizzes, a chat feature, and other applications. For the advanced class, a writing composition element was also suggested to improve writing skills. McLaren (2011)'s research suggested the blended curriculum should be reviewed and adjusted for successful learning outcomes, and most of all, faculty should put more commitment and enthusiasm into a course and improve technical ability. Furthermore, two participants commented that the blended Korean language curriculum and exercises were effective for learning, but one suggested reducing the amount of presentations. However, Smirnova and Nuzha (2013) found an LMS can improve students' academic presentation skills and develop their reflective learning skills. Finally, another participant urged a reduction in the amount of work completed without an instructor in relation to student ability. This suggestion displayed the students' misunderstanding of the language learning process.

The suggestions gathered from this research question showed participants who have metacognition and autonomous learning skills discovered their own learning strategies and have experienced successful language learning outcomes. On the other

hand, participants who were not fully aware of metacognition and self-regulation learning skills tended to suggest reducing the amount of self-learning or presentation activities. Although further research regarding students' metacognition and autonomous learning skills is necessary to find out the extent of their awareness of such skills or the language learning process, these findings are significant to contribute to improving the quality of blended language curricula for learner autonomy.

Most data from each research question supported the findings of existing research related to blended learning such as the effectiveness of language learning and achievement. However, this study indicated students' lack of autonomous learning skills and awareness of the language learning process can negatively influence their language achievement. Furthermore, autonomous learning sessions in the blended language curriculum were identified to possibly be the best practice for blended learning and implementation strategies.

Recommendations

This study was a phenomenological case study to examine the perception of students concerning the effectiveness factors and challenges of the blended Korean language curriculum on autonomous learning and language achievement, especially in listening and reading comprehension. Due to the necessity to examine effectiveness of the blended Korean language course at the participating college, as well as other colleges teaching a foreign language in the college's district, it is recommended that further studies for blended language learning be completed on a regular basis as student demographics change and emerging education technology tools are necessary for student use.

From the research findings, the need for interaction and collaboration between teachers and students was noted to improve students' cognitive language learning. Teachers and students should continuously negotiate on teaching and learning activities and curriculum. Moreover, teachers should receive further training on the effectiveness of blended language education, how to design a student-centered curriculum using LMS tools, and how to help learners construct their knowledge and become autonomous learners. Also, technology support including the use of LMS tools for faculty and students was identified to help learner success in using the target language through negotiations, collaborations, interactions, and communication. Before the start of a blended course, students need to receive an orientation regarding the effectiveness of blended language learning, use of LMS tools, the importance of learner autonomy, and realistic expectations for students to improve their autonomous learning and language achievement.

A more detailed study about the effectiveness of faculty and student training and the faculty and students' grasp of autonomous learning skills should be completed to better determine the effectiveness of blended language education and the significance of learner autonomy. Interviews of a focus group, a large number of participants for data collection, and compared perceptions between faculty and students are also recommended for a future study. A close examination of the course effectiveness and challenges for faculty that may increase or decrease the benefits of blended language education should also be completed. The findings from this specific study about students' perceptions will be shared with the blended learning faculty and administration.

Conclusions

Through addressing the research questions, the objectives for this qualitative phenomenological case study were achieved: (a) reviewing and exploring existing literature related to blended learning theory and blended language learning models with technology tools; (b) adding to the existing scholarly research in the area of blended learning; (c) conducting surveys of students' perceptions at the participating college; (d) collecting, analyzing, and evaluating data from the study using a qualitative research method; (e) identifying and comparing the gathered course effectiveness factors and challenges from the perspective of students in blended Korean language courses; and (f) recognizing any gaps or significances between the students' perspectives and current literature about blended learner success.

Blended courses have become more practical for both teachers and learners due to effective course delivery at the participating college, as well as other institutions of foreign language education. Students' perceptions concerning the effectiveness factors and challenges of language achievement and autonomous learning in the blended Korean language course can possibly increase course effectiveness and decrease course inefficiency. The current study found most students recognized the effectiveness of language learning and achievement in the blended Korean language course, but they were not confident about the effectiveness of autonomous learning either because they were not self-driven learners or they perceived it dependent on other learning elements of the blended curriculum.

Regarding the improving and hindering factors of language achievement and learner autonomy, the following were identified: the significance of autonomous learning

sessions, the need for improvement of blended curricula for autonomous learning, and the requirement to train for better understanding of learner autonomy, the language learning process, and more efficient use of an LMS. Furthermore, students depended on the teachers' role for assistance such as immediate feedback, tailored materials, and altering the amount of assignments. Therefore, further study about teachers' perceptions of blended language courses as well as training for designing and teaching a blended language course are recommended. Although various factors were not recognized by this study due to the small number of participants, the findings could contribute to increasing language course effectiveness, satisfaction, and successful student learning in the blended language course modality.

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Appendices

Appendix A**:** Demographic information & Questionnaire

PARTI: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

• Please answer all question and fields:

A1. Gender

- Female
- Male
- Other
- Prefer not to answer

A2. Ethnicity

- African American
- Asian
- Caucasian
- Hispanic
- Other:

A3. What is your age group?

- 20-25
- 26-30
- 31-35
- 36-40

A4. Are you single or married (or with kids)?

□ Single

□ Married

□ Married with kids

A5. What is your education?

□ Some college credits

□ AA or AS

□ BA or BS

□ MA or MS

A6. What are your first & recent Defense Language Proficient Test (DLPT) scores?

□ 1st DLPT at the DLIFLC: Year:_____ LC/RC : _____

□ Recent DLPT: Year: _____ LC/ RC : _____

A7. When and what level of Korean course did you take at the Osan LTD?

□ Year: _____

□ Class: Intermediate ( )/ Advanced class ( )

A8. Have you ever taken any blended classes at school or college?

□ Yes

□ No

PART II: BLENDED KOREAN LANGUAGE LEARNING EXPERIENCES:

Q1. How do you perceive the effectiveness of language achievement in especially listening and reading skill in a blended Korean language course which is combined face-to-face class with SAKAI, Learning Management System (LMS)?

Q2. What factors do you perceive improve or hinder your listening and reading skills in a blended Korean language course?

Q3. How do you perceive the improvement of autonomous learning skills in a blended Korean language course?

Q4. What factors do you perceive improve or hinder your autonomous learning skills in a blended Korean language course?

Q5. How do you perceive the effective blended language curriculum for success of language learning?

Q6: What challenges or concerns do you have regarding the blended Korean language course?

Q7: Do you have any suggestions to improve language achievement and autonomous learning skill in the blended language learning environment?

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

Introduction:

My name is Misook Ahn, Associate Professor/ Director at Osan LTD, DLIFLC. You are invited to participate in a web-based online survey being conducted for a dissertation at Northcentral University in Prescott, Arizona. The purpose of this study is to examine student perception of language achievement and learner autonomy in a blended Korean language course, which combined face-to-face with a Learning Management System, *SAKAI*. There is no deception in this study. I am interested in your opinions and reflection about your language learning in a blended Korean language course at the Osan LTD, Korea.

The online survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

Activities:

If you participate in this research, you will be asked to:

1. Answer biographic questionnaire
2. Answer the open-ended questions about your language learning experiences in a blended Korean course at the Osan LTD, Korea

Eligibility:

You are eligible to participate in this research if you:

1. attended any Intermediate or Advanced blended Korean language course at the Osan LTD, Korea in 2014~2016
2. used *SAKAI* during the class hours and at home for assignment in a Korean language course at the Osan LTD, Korea in 2014~2016

You are not eligible to participate in this research if you:

1. didn't use SAKAI during the class at the Osan LTD, Korea
2. attended the class at the Osan LTD, Korea in 2012 ~ 2013

Risks:

There are minimal risks in this study because some of the information is personally sensitive and also includes questions about the meaning of learning which may be distressing to some people. You may withdraw at any time and you may choose not to answer any question that you feel uncomfortable in answering.

Benefits:

There are no direct benefits to you of participating in this research. No incentives are offered. The results will help to improve a future Korean course and future students will get benefits to attend a better Korean language course.

Confidentiality:

The information you provide will be kept confidential to the extent allowable by law. All data are coded such that your name is not associated with them. In addition, the coded data are made available only to the researchers associated with this project. The people who will have access to your information are myself, my dissertation chair, and my dissertation committee, etc. The Institutional Review Board may also review my research and view your information.

I will secure your information with these steps: locking the computer file with a password. I will keep your data for 7 years. Then, I will delete electronic data and destroy paper data.

Contact Information:

If you have questions about this study, you can contact me at:
M.Ahn4668@email.ncu.edu
; +82-10-4452-4425.

My dissertation chair's name is Dr. Abigail Scheg. She works at Northcentral University and is supervising me on the research. You can contact her at: ascheg@ncu.edu.

If you have questions about your rights in the research, or if a problem has occurred, please contact the Institutional Review Board at: irb@ncu.edu or 1-888-327-2877 ext. 8014.

Voluntary Participation:

Your participation is voluntary. If you decide not to participate, or if you stop participation after you start, there will be no penalty to you. You will not lose any benefit to which you are otherwise entitled.

Electronic Consent :

Please select your choice below. You may print a copy of this consent form for your records. Clicking on the "Agree" button indicates that

- You have read the above information
- You voluntarily agree to participate
- You are 18 years of age or older

☐ **Agree**

☐ **Disagree**

Provisions for Future Use

The data collected from you will be maintained for use in future research studies in this field.

☐ **Agree**

☐ **Disagree**

Thank you for your participation in my study.

Misook Ahn
Associate Professor
Director of Osan LTD
Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center
M.Ahn4668@email.ncu.edu
82-10-4452-4425

Appendix C: Student Invitation Email

Dear Former Students,

My name is Misook Ahn, Associate Professor/ Director at Osan LTD, DLIFLC. You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted for a dissertation at Northcentral University, Prescott, Arizona.

The study is "Student Perceptions of Language Achievement and Learner Autonomy in a Blended Korean Language Course: The Case Study of Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center". The purpose of this qualitative case study is to investigate student perceptions of course effectiveness factors for language proficiency as well as learner autonomy in a blended Korean language course to improve language achievement, especially in listening and reading comprehension skills. Your participation will contribute to improve the quality of instruction in Osan LTD, DLIFLC.

The estimated time to complete this survey is approximately 30 minutes.

The study complies with and has been approved by Institutional Review Board of Northcentral University. Before starting the survey, please read an Informed Consent. The survey includes Part I: the biographic information questionnaire and Part II: Blended language learning experiences. Your participation in this survey is voluntary and confidential, but very much appreciated. All data will be coded and secured.

The following are involved in this research study and may be contacted at any time: Researcher-Misook Ahn (M.Ahn4668@email.ncu.edu) and 82-10-452-4425; Dissertation Committee Chair-Dr. Abigail Scheg (ascheg@ncu.edu).

If you have any questions regarding the survey, please do not hesitate to contact me via email or phone anytime.

Thank you for your assistance with my study.

Misook Ahn
Associate Professor
Director of Osan LTD
Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center
M.Ahn4668@email.ncu.edu
82-10-4452-4425