



Promoting Self-Directed English Language Learning

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Abstract

The purpose of the seminar was to motivate teachers toward improving their English language proficiency by themselves with little to no support from the knowledgeable others. The big problem which our learners, who join Universities, are facing today is their very limited knowledge and skills of English language. This learners' problem may be reduced if first, teachers of all disciplines improve their English language proficiency to better level, and use English language as a medium of instruction without mixing with local languages. So, the main purpose of this seminar was raising teachers' awareness and motivation towards improving their English language. In addition, it was also intended to inspire the attendants toward learning more local languages to become polyglot/multi-lingual as our country is blessed with different languages. Different research papers and article were reviewed, compared with the reality in our country, and analyzed carefully using constant comparative method. The paper contained some concepts of self-directed language learning, benefits of being multi-lingual, experiences of self-directed language learning from some polyglots around the world, and the roles of technology in self-directed language learning. From the review, it is concluded that self-directed language learning is the better way to learn any local or foreign languages within a short period of time with the help of today's widespread and highly sophisticated technology.

Key words: self-directed; language learning; polyglots; technology

1. INTRODUCTION

The origin of self-directed language learning lies somewhere in the distant past when human beings experienced a sense of self-awareness, or self-consciousness in the process of trying to master a particular chunk of knowledge. However, human being started to systematically steer or manage the learning process. As time passed, however, guiding groups of children towards the mastery of knowledge and skills became entrusted to professional teachers. In the end, this movement resulted in teacher-centered teaching, in what Freire (2005:71–72) refers to as the 'banking' approach to teaching and learning where the teacher 'deposits' knowledge in learners and where the latter become mere 'receptacles' to be 'filled' by the teacher.

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The Freire's Banking concept of education involves a narrating subject (the teacher) and the listening objects (Students). The teacher talks about reality as if it was motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable. Teacher's task is to "fill" the students with the contents of his narration_ contents which are detached from reality, disconnected from the totality which increases learners' critical literacy. Narration (with the teacher as a narrator) leads the students to memorize mechanically the narrated content. The worst yet, is it turns them into containers, into receptacles to be filled by the teacher. The more completely the teacher fills the containers, the better a teacher he/she is. The more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better students they are. This narration sickness in education especially in English language teaching and learning in Ethiopia seems not end yet. As a result, learners have been showing little to no progress at each level of education. On the other hand, "Self-directed learning as a teaching-learning approach is rooted in three basic assumptions, namely: 1. Learners are human beings able to learn, 2. Learners are able to master learning contents, and 3. Learners are able to manage this process independently and even autonomously with the (temporary) assistance of a tutor or mentor" (Guglielmino as cited in Mentz and Oosthuizen 2016).

Learning a foreign/second language is an exciting endeavor that can change one's life by exposing him/her to new cultures, people and places. Furthermore, speaking a second/foreign language undeniably opens an array of new doors for people in terms of employment. But in order to reap these benefits, first one needs to learn the language. With the rapid development of technology in the 21st century, the easiness and possibility of learning language by oneself with little or no support from other people increased. One basic tenet/principle of self-directed language learning is learners' autonomy and responsibility.

It is not that you learn something and then you use it; neither is it that you use something and learn it. Instead, it is in using that you learn - they are inseparable. (Larsen-Freeman 2007: 783). However, most English language lessons (especially in Ethiopia) are usually pre-planned and progress in a fairly predictable manner, often following the teacher initiation-learner response-teacher follow-up cycle. This pre-planned and teachers-fronted methods of language teaching and learning may not equip learners with real-life language. Sometimes, however, there may be moments that have not been pre-planned and give rise to spontaneous language use. Examples of such 'less legitimate' (Waring 2013: 191) language use include off-topic conversations, asides, students' cheeky repartee, and remarks that teachers do not

always appreciate and, at times, even penalize. Interestingly, these instances of communication bear a close resemblance to what learners have to be able to handle when they use English outside the classroom.

When students are allowed to function outside the confines of conventional classroom communication, features of everyday language use, such as humor and language play (Maybin and Swann 2007), may appear which, together with other forms of unplanned language use, require quick decisions and the activation of linguistic and metalinguistic skills. In today's technologically well advanced world, specifically in language education, learning language by one self is easy as learners can get easy-access to different resources, knowledge and information.

In today's technologically developed world, it is expected that students should be capable of learning and also developing their knowledge by themselves and that the learner is undoubtedly the main and the most significant person in the process of learning. Different researches also confirm this concept. However, still in Ethiopia, the teaching-learning-process is pre-planned, teacher-fronted and strictly classroom-based in all disciplines, particularly in language teaching. As a result, learners have been graduating from colleges and universities with little knowledge and skills, and with very little to no creativity. On the opposite side, the labor market nowadays demands graduates with sound attributes of problem solving capacity and individuals who are able to think creatively and critically (Hamzeh, 2018). To achieve the skills the world needs today, self-directed learning, especially self-directed language learning inside and outside the classroom is necessary.

According to Fengning (2013), the rapid development of technology and fast pace of change in the 21st century often render professional knowledge obsolete by the time students graduate from postsecondary institutions. In addition, certain acquired competencies, such as foreign language, require constant maintenance after students leave the classroom. As such, it is incumbent on teachers to develop students' self-directed leaning skills so that they may cope with such inevitable changes. Today, self-directed learning (SDL) has been widely implemented across many fields at post-secondary institutions in the world. However, foreign/second language learning in Ethiopia is still traditional method in which teachers feed learners the pre-planned content of the course in the classroom only. This traditional method of language teaching is leading learners to fail in their overall education especially in higher

education. Theoretically, there is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) which encourages learner-centeredness, but remained on the paper without implementation.

The basic tenets of self-directed learning, which call for personal autonomy and responsibility, align closely with the fundamental principles of higher education (Wilcox, 1996). Nevertheless, the dominance of lectures in higher education classrooms is continued. Many scholars argue that the development of self-directed learning skills is essential to:

- a) improve instructional delivery by meeting the learning needs of adult learners,
- b) instill interest in lifelong learning necessary in the contexts of a global economy and an information-centered society,
- c) individualize the teaching of knowledge and skills unique to college student growth, and
- d) promote students' self-evaluation, motivation, and critical thinking skills (Bourner, 2003; Dynan, Cate, & Rhee, 2008; Patterson, Crooks, & Lunyk-Child, 2002).

Even though the role of English language is high in Ethiopia, the proficiency level of students, teachers and other users is low. For instance, study made by Mebratu (2015) on primary school teachers in Hawassa city, 70% of them confirmed that their English proficiency is very low. In a world where a lot of polyglots around the world master one language every three to four years, it is a big problem for our learners and teachers not be able to master one language after learning it from 12-15 years. The polyglots/multi-linguals around the world learns as many languages as they can, not by attending the formal classroom but by using technology at hand. They need little to no support from knowledgeable others to master their language. Generally, they use self-directed language learning. However, pre-planned and teacher-fronted method of language teaching which Freire (1984) called "The Banking system of Education) is continued. Similar to his statement, our teachers consider themselves only they know everything about the subject matter they teach, and consider learners know little or nothing. So they always try to feed their learners the knowledge they have. According to Freire, the principles of the banking concept education are:

- a) The teacher teaches and the students are taught
- b) The teacher knows everything and the students know nothing
- c) The teacher thinks and the students are thought about

- d) The teacher talks and the students listen-meekly
- e) The teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined
- f) The teacher chooses and enforces his choices, and the students comply
- g) The teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher.
- h) The teacher chooses the program content, and the students adapt to it.

Generally, the teacher is the subject of the learning process while the students are mere objects.

All these principles are still working in Ethiopian education at all level of schools including universities and colleges. But this is an invisible form of oppression than education since learners are oppressed only to what teachers give them. Learners are motivated rarely to learn by themselves which leads to failure in quality education. The objective of the paper was to raise the awareness of teachers about self-directed language learning and motivating them to use it to develop their own English language proficiency, and the proficiency of their learners. By using self-directed language learning, teachers may improve their English language from where they are to the better level, and also can learn more local languages in their long life.

2. Methods and Materials

Electronic searches were used using the following databases: Modern Journal of Language Teaching Methods (MJLTM), International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, English Language Teaching Journal, SAGE Journals Online and Springer Link. Searching strategies used included keywords search like: Self-directed Learning in Language Teaching-learning Processes, Self-directed Language Learning, Theories behind Self-directed Language Learning, Polyglots' Experiences of Language Learning, The roles of Technology in Self-directed Language Learning and other key words. Around 12 articles which are related to self-directed learning are downloaded. Among these articles seven of them were not directly related to self-directed language learning, and were not reviewed. But 5 of them were directly related to SDLL, and were analyzed for this article. In addition, among these 5 articles, 3 of them were original articles with empirical evidences.. Articles were chosen and analyzed employing the constant comparative method suggested by Lincoln and Gub (1985). Using this method, the coding scheme emerged inductively after reading each paper.

Following this method, the review attempted to examine and compare each individual article, forming different themes, comparing themes, to reach at a conclusion. The following table summarizes Authors' name, Research/article objective, research method, data collection method and sample size of the analyzed articles.

“Table 1: Summary of some articles that are reviewed and analyzed in this article”

Authors Name	Research aim	Research method	Data collection method	Sample size
Hamzeh Moradi (2018)	Self-directed Learning in Language Teaching-learning Processes	descriptive	Questionnaire and interview	Not given
Du, Fengning (2013)	Student Perspectives of Self-Directed Language Learning	descriptive	Focus Group Interview	13 students
ÉvaIllés and SumruAkcan (2016)	Bringing real-life language use into EFL classrooms	Quasi-experimental	Observations during the treatment & post-test	25 Turkey and 9 Hungary pre-service English Teachers
Elsa Mentz&IzakOosthuizen(2016)	Self-directed learning research: An imperative for transforming the educational landscape	Book of 332pages	A collection of different research findings	Not Given
Dominique Ambinintsoa, Jo Mynard, Kie Yamamoto (2020)	Promoting Self-directed Language Learning: Transitioning from Paper-based Materials to Online Learning Apps	Quasi-experimental	Observation & participants reflection on the process of intervention	Not Given

Moreover, using searching keywords “Polyglots’ experiences of Language Learning” on YouTube, a lot of videos were downloaded and listened again and again. Specially,

polyglots' experiences sharing on TedTalk, on Polyglots' gathering and different TV shows were critically listened and analyzed in this article. For instance, two videos by Lydia Machova entitled "Ten things polyglots do differently and the secrets of learning new languages" were critically analyzed and included in this article.

3. Empirical Review

3.1. Concept of Self-Directed Language Learning (SDLL)

According to Knowles (1975), SDLL is a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes. (p.18). According to this scholar, SDLL is more appropriate for post-secondary and adult education program. So, as language teachers, this SDLL method is the appropriate method for you to learn real-life language.

The emphasis in self-directed learning is on three aspects, namely 'self' as in self-planning, self-education, self-instruction, self-teaching, self-study, autonomous learning and – as Long (2000:11) indicates – auto-didaxy and self-regulated learning. 'Self' refers to the distinct individuality or identity of people (in this case, the learners) as well as their consciousness of their own identity and being (Sinclair 1999:1346). The 'self' is regarded as the 'driver' or the manager of the learning process. Self-directed learners display curiosity, initiative, persistence, independence, and discipline and self- motivation in learning.

As Long (2000:13) emphasizes, "self-directed learning is characterized by the fact that the learner as an individual is conscious of at least some of the important parts of the learning process and is able to apply self(-consciousness) to those elements for purposes of controlling the learning process." According to Long (2000:15), "The self-directed learner displays three primary psychological dimensions. These are metacognition, motivation and self-regulation. In addition, self-directed learners display four secondary psychological dimensions: choice, competence, control and confidence.

Emphasis is, thirdly, on 'learning', not in the first instance as knowledge acquisition but rather as the process of mastering the learning material (Shin 2011:604–612). As Lee *et al.*

(2014) indicate, self-directed learning is a form of learning that is more challenging and requires more action on the part of the learner than just being a passive absorber of knowledge, a passive participant in the transmission of knowledge dispensed by the teacher. The learner in self-directed learning is an active role player in the learning process, a person who can communicate effectively, cope with challenges and possesses problem-solving skills (Larson & Miller 2011). Similarly, Williamson (2007) depicts that SDL is a process of learning in which learner has the main responsibility and work individually and independently in their learning process. According to Shannon (2008), in SDL process learners are responsible and managers of their own learning activities and processes. Hendry and Ginns (2009) defined SDL as a process in which learners make decisions for their own studies.

Generally, from the above scholarly views, one can conclude that self-directed language learning is a kind of independent learning. Based on their styles of learning, it is learners that choose their favorite language contents and learning strategies. Responsibility to improve their language is on learners themselves rather than their teachers. Learners need only little support from their teachers, or any knowledgeable others. So, the role of language teachers is facilitating the learning process and scaffolding learners in their gaps.

3.2. Self-directed learning as teaching learning approach

A teaching-learning method is never neutral in its conception of life; it is always rooted in some or other deeper pre-theoretical foundation. The rudimentary theoretical status of self-directed learning finds expression in the terms used in literature to describe it. As cited in Mentz and Oosthuizen (2016), Fisher, King and Tague (2001:516) refer to self-directed learning as a method of instruction. Abraham, Upadhya and Ramnarayan (2005:135) see it as a process in which students take initiative. Merriam (2001:8) refers to it as a form of study or a type of learning. Blumberg (2000:199) regards it as a model of learning, and Agran, Blanchard and Wehmeyer (2000:361) describe it as a goal to be attained through self-determination.

The theory that would be able to support and reinforce the core ideas of self-directed learning by furnishing self-directed learning with an appropriate pre-theoretical and theoretical underpinning and meet the criterion of reflecting the complexity of the teaching-

learning situation is questionable. In response to these questions, scholars in the field of self-directed learning have in the past turned to self-determination theory as Guglielmino (2008:10) has done. As cited in Mentz and Oosthuizen (2016), Guglielmino uses the examples of George Washington Carver and Madame Marie Curie to illustrate how someone can succeed in changing his or her past, present and future through sheer self-determination. However, not all people possess this ability as she emphasizes: ‘Some individuals will overcome all obstacles to continue their self-directed learning; others need assistance in accepting the responsibility and developing the skills and attitudes for lifelong self-directed learning.’

Another theory that is related to self-directed learning is ‘Capability theory.’ Capability theory holds that learners have capabilities to be and do what they have reason to value, and these capabilities have to be developed. Capability theory is fundamental to self-directed learning, self-regulated learning as well as self-determination theory in that it is rooted in the core thesis that all people possess capabilities to do and become what they have reason to value. Self-directedness, self-regulation and self-determination in the learning process all rest on this core thesis of capability theory. Capability theory can therefore be regarded as fundamental to the other theories or approaches: learners potentially possess the *capability* to self-direct, self-regulate and self-determine.

3.2.1. Capability Theory as a Base for Self-Directed Learning

Capability theory believes that all human beings possess particular capabilities that they have to develop, and they should be afforded the freedom and the opportunities to develop their capabilities. Their dignity as human beings should be respected, and they should be given every opportunity in life and society to develop their capabilities optimally. The capability theory is a normative framework for the evaluation and assessment of individual well-being and social arrangements (Dang2014:460; Robeyns 2005:94). The core characteristic of capability theory is its focus on what people are effectively able to do and to be on their capabilities.

The three basic tenets of self-directed learning seem to dovetail into the precepts of capability theory in the following manner:

1. All learners without learning disabilities possess the ability to master learning contents and skills.
2. Learners should be guided and encouraged to self-manage their learning
3. Learners should be allowed to develop to optimal levels.

The core concepts of capability theory, namely functioning (that is, what a person manages to do or be), capabilities (that is, the different functioning that a person might achieve), conversion factors (that is, the translation of commodities or resources into functioning and capabilities), freedom (that is, to choose) and agency (that is, the ability to achieve the goals that a person values regardless of whether these goals are connected to human wellbeing (Dang 2014:461–462, 464). Capability theory promotes respect for people's ability to do the things that they have reason to value. People are disadvantaged if they have less opportunity to achieve the things that they have reason to value. The idea of freedom also entails that people are free to determine what they want, what they value and ultimately what they decide to choose (Sen 2010:232).

3.2.2. Case-based teaching for self-directed learning

Case-based teaching elicits engaged learning that it enables student teachers to experience the reality of school teaching vicariously, that it develops problem-solving skills and that it addresses the so-called theory-practice divide by enabling student teachers to relate course literature and theoretical knowledge to dilemmas of practice. Despite evidence that case-based teaching seemingly stimulates independence in thinking, pursues learning beyond the explicitly stated expectations and allows students to identify their own learning needs – all aspects associated with self-direction in learning – little is published on the affordances of case-based teaching for self-directed learning. Case-based learning is described by Gade and Chari (2013:356) as a ‘... method where students are motivated to learn on their own so as to inculcate the habit of self-learning.’ These authors list four reasons for using case-based learning:

- To provide students with a relevant opportunity to see theory in practice.
- To require students to analyze data to reach a conclusion.
- To develop analytic, communicative, and collaborative skills along with the content knowledge.

- To provide an opportunity for students to put themselves in the decision maker's shoes. (p. 358)

They conclude that case-based teaching assists students to become more self-directed learners and that it improves student motivation and the development of communication skills. Loyens, Magda and Rikers (2008) view self-directed learning (SDL) as an umbrella term for various processes such as goal setting, metacognition and self-assessment, all of which influence learning in various ways. They argue that SDL goes back to the existentialist perspective, which postulates freedom, responsibility and personal views. SDL should '... empower a student to become a free, mature, and authentic self' (Loyens *et al.* 2008:414).

3.3. Self-Directed Learning and Technology

Technological advancement during the past decade have opened new window to a large amount of learning resources and information for language learners. With the advancement of modern technology, the demand for instructing language learners who are self-directed, independent, autonomous and responsible for their own learning process is increased. According to Bonk (2010) learning is now becoming more informal and self-directed. Learners can make decisions over learning content, timing, location, methods and paths of learning. With the fast progress of technology, a significant number of online learning resources have established an informal learning in which individuals are allowed to learn just on demand and when they want and needed to learn. According Moradi (2015: 112), "Technology has the potential to restructure and transform the traditional curriculum and teaching methods, particularly the interaction with course material and delivery of associated sources".

Language learners with internet access have a great opportunity to use on line learning resources on their demand and they can learn anywhere and anytime they like. As (Song, Karimi, & Kim, 2015) demonstrate, mobile technologies easily provide such access even in underprivileged and distant areas of the world. According to Song, Bonk, & Whiting (2012), a large number of learners probably like to use open and free online resources during their online learning experiences, like TED, MIT Open Course Ware Open College Textbooks and etc. The development of these online learning resources can have a crucial impact on the attitudes and beliefs regarding learning. According to Corrigan (2012), with the enhancement

of information communication technologies (ICTs), learning resources and raising emphasis on autonomous learning in undergraduate and postgraduate education, an increasing need to revise the present academic syllabi and to incorporate items that support SDL is felt.

McLoughlin & Lee (2010) state that self-directed learners in order to establish their own knowledge may examine and manage their learning materials and as well learning process, reflect on their learning and evaluate it individually. The easy access of modern educational technologies and online resources strengthened and broadened the capacity for self-directed language learners to enhance their knowledge independently and to have a control over their learning process. Therefore, modern educational technologies and online learning resources have a significant potential in supporting autonomous and self-directed learning. Greenhow et al. (2009), with concentrating on the features of Web 2.0, assert that educators and teachers need to consider students 'participatory facets and creative methods and procedures of online resources, for instance, creating learning materials such as blogs, podcasts, video casts and sharing them with peers, and taking part in building knowledge through collaborative practices.

According to McLoughlin & Lee (2010), the dynamic, participatory, social facets and process-based of learning through online resources can support people independency and self-directed learners. Sridharan, Deng, Kirk, and Corbitt (2010) mention that the main factors which influence the effectiveness of learning through online resources include:

- a) technological facets
- b) management of the technology and learning resources
- c) material organizations.

Dunlap & Lowenthal (2011) depict that recent technologies can help students to enhance their problem-solving skills and as well as their metacognitive capabilities. Different research results also proved that teaching foreign languages (specially speaking and listening skills) using technology is useful for both teachers and students. Uluc (2012) argued that in today's classroom, the use of information technologies (IT) are more powerful tools for teaching-learning process, to motivate learners, and to make the content of teaching more interesting. Cetto (2010, p.121) also puts forward, "In my experience, technology has broadened the spectrum of interaction while empowering the students' learning process by providing better opportunities for language usage". All this information shows that integrating technology into foreign language classroom-specially listening skills which most researchers call it 'the

neglected skill' can contribute a lot in developing the over-al language proficiency. It is on the basis of this information that this research will apply podcasting technology into listening skill course given to university students to see if podcasting technology can be an alternative teaching method to the traditional one.

3.4. Teachers' Role in SDL

Teachers have dual tasks in SDL; they must help students acquire discipline-specific knowledge and develop a set of SDL competencies. Departing from their traditional role as lecturers, SDL teachers still have a primary responsibility to facilitate student learning by providing encouragement, negotiating a contract for goals, strategies, and evaluation criteria with learners, acting as a manager of the learning experience instead of a knowledge provider, helping learners locate resources, and creating an atmosphere of openness and trust to promote better performance (Lowry, 1989).

It has been documented that the majority of higher education faculty are either uncommitted to the SDL framework or inadequately versed in the pedagogical and curricular knowledge required for the implementation of SDL (Hong, Haefner, & Slekar, 2011; Wilcox, 1996). In a study of teachers' views toward SDL at a Hong Kong university, Chan (2003) reported that teachers still considered themselves responsible for the methodological aspects of teaching language in spite of their proclaimed recognition of the value of learner autonomy. At the same time, teachers considered themselves less responsible for students' activities outside of class, indicating their weak commitment to the SDL philosophy. According to Black and Henig (2005), traditional instructional approaches significantly impede the development of students' skills and the widespread use of SDL in college courses. On the one hand, students are socialized to rely on pre-written course syllabi as roadmaps for completing a course; on the other hand, teachers are often unwilling to let students choose materials, activities, and evaluation criteria due to time shortages and budget factors.

Generally, self-directed language learning helps to learn a real-life language that learners face outside the classroom. Real-Life Language Learning (RLLL) means the use of spontaneous language both in the classroom outside the class. Authentic audios and videos, authentic texts, off-topic conversation, and playful talk are source of RLLL. So, English language

teachers, we sometimes need to use unplanned and playful language which learners face outside the school compound. Moreover, SDLL can help individuals to become a multi-lingual/ polyglot. Being a multi-lingual is not an easy thing, it is a blessing because multi-linguals/polyglots have a lot of advantages. Some of these advantages are:

A. Cognitive development: Researches have proven that bilinguals and multi-linguals have more improved cognitive abilities than monolinguals. It is also proved those bilinguals/multi-linguals are more creative and apt with respect to flexible thinking ability (Landry, 1973). In addition, a study conducted by Mohanty (1992), indicates that bilinguals/multi-linguals showed superiority in cognitive, linguistic, and academic performances” over monolinguals.

B. Linguistic awareness and communicative competence: The outcome of this study led the researchers to claim that bilingual experiences foster linguistic competences in varied verbal tasks in life. As these sets of research studies testify, the bilinguals, eventually, in their use of more than one language, develop better language proficiency, sensitivity, and definitely more in-depth understanding and control of their mother tongue. The research finding by Kessler and Quinn (1987), May et al. (2004), confirms that the multi-linguals, as a result of their diverse language experiences, have high self-confidence and stronger willingness to communicate without fear of constructing non-well-formed utterances.

C. Academic Performance: According to Cook (2001) “...a person who speaks multiple languages has an amazing vision of the world from two or more perspectives, enabling them to be more flexible in their thinking, and learn reading more easily. Multi-linguals, therefore, are not restricted to a single world-view, but also have a better understanding that other outlooks are possible. Indeed, this has always been seen as one of the main educational advantages of language teaching. In addition, multi-linguals/bilinguals are people with better ear for listening and endowed with sharper memories on diverse issues in life, better problem solvers, better critical thinking abilities, and are generally people with high academic standards with less effort than monolinguals.”

D. Job Opportunity: The advantages of being bilingual are more visible in today’s job market than in the past, especially with the advent of globalization and the rapid rate of technological advancement reaching all nooks and crannies of the world.

E. Socio-cultural Advantage: It is now well accepted that language and culture are inextricably linked because language is the means by which people who share the same culture express their belonging to a common or shared cultural experience. Considering the fact that culture is transmitted and expressed through language multi-linguals are obviously multicultural individuals who can adapt different cultures more easily. The implication is that they are better placed to handle cultural shocks than monolinguals (Chumbow, 2009; p.54).

F. Economic advantages of multi/bilingualism: Being multilingual can be considered as a form of human capital for it can afford one the opportunity of earning higher income and obtaining aspiring employment status in any influential society.

3.5. Individual Differences in Self-Directed language learning

Khasinah (2014), in her exploration about factors contribute to language learning, came to a decision that there are seven main contributing factors; motivation, attitude, age, intelligence, aptitude, personality and learning style. Among these factors, Motivation, attitude and learning styles play a great role in acquiring language easily.

Motivation indeed plays a significant role in terms of language learning. Robert Gardner defines a motivated individual as someone who is “goal directed, expends effort, is persistent, is attentive, has desires, exhibits a positive effect, is aroused, has expectations, demonstrates self-confidence and has reasons” (2010, p. 8). This kind of motivation is called intrinsic motivation. Maslow and Brown focused on the importance of motivation in SLA and claim that “intrinsic motivation leads to greater success in learning a foreign language” (Maslow 1970; Brown 1994 as cited in Khasinah 2014, p. 258).

On the other hand, what plays an important role is how a person feels about learning a particular language and the way of learning (how they feel about the teacher, curriculum, classmates and course etc., if there are some). Learners with a positive attitude are able to learn more and faster than those with a negative attitude (Khasinah 2014, p. 259). Khasinah further examined the work of Ellis. He views attitude as sets of beliefs about different factors concerning language learning. According to him, “language attitudes are the attitudes which speakers of different languages have toward other’s languages or to their own language”(Ellis 1985, p. 292 as cited in Khasinah 2014, p. 259).

A learning style can be, in some literatures, recognized as *cognitive style* and may be defined in multiple ways, depending on a person's perspective. Khasinah views a learning style as a "particular way in which a learner tries to learn something" (2014, p. 264). Moreover, Brown (2000) defined learning styles as "the manner in which individuals perceive and process information in learning situations." Oxford, on the other hand, takes into consideration a learner's preference and defines a learning style as a "learner's preferred mode of dealing with new information" (1990, p. 74). Putting all these definitions together; individuals has their own individual learning styles which refers to the way in which a student absorbs, processes, comprehends and retains information.

3.6. Polyglots and Self-Directed Language Learning

3.6.1. Definition of Polyglot

The term polyglot has no fixed/single definition as different scholars define it in different ways. Some scholars define it as a man/woman who can manage one and more than one languages; two and more than two languages; three and more than three languages. For instance, NiaKirniawati, who carried out a case study with a nine-language speaker, define polyglot as "a person who is able to communicate in more than one language" (2017, p.2). So, according to this linguist, at least one language is enough to be considered multilingual ora polyglot. On the other hand, Nation (1983) who conducted a study with "good" language learners, defined the term polyglot, as someone who is fluent in four or more languages.

A famous polyglot Steve Kaufman, who claims he can speak 20 foreign languages, puts possible reason why there are no fixed definitions of the word "polyglot". According to Kaufman (2019), people have different ways in engaging with languages. There are people who are able to read and understand the written and spoken word very well, yet are notable to speak in the given language. On the contrary, there are people who have great socializing skills, but have little or limited knowledge of a foreign language in which they communicate. Kaufman defines a polyglot as someone "who knows and is able to use several languages" to show that the person does not have to speak the language; i.e. the person therefore has to only be able to use the language in whichever way.

Even though there is no agreed up on definition of polyglot, most polyglots and linguists agreed up on the definition which is "someone who speaks three and more than three

languages on the B1 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

3.6.2. Polyglots' Experiences in Self-Directed Language Learning

There are many language learning courses, course materials, audios and videos on the market today, some of them good, some not, which are designed to teach a specific language. It is rare, however, to find a book which can give language learners the methodologies and techniques required to learn multiple languages. Sometimes, it may be better to gather some exceptional individuals' experiences of language learning in their life, and share to whoever wants to use. So, I liked to share a few polyglots' experiences of language learning.



1. Benny Lewis

This polyglot from Ireland speaks 11 languages fluently. He founded the website called “*Fluent in Three Months*”, and has published a best-selling book. He shared the following experience for people who want to learn more languages. According to him, the best way to manage one language in a short period of time is “**Starting using (speaking) the language you are learning from day one.**” Many people think that they will start using (speaking) the target language after making enough preparation. That is very bad experience for language learners. The preparation you are thinking may last a year, 2 years, 10 years or more, but you will never come to the Magic day you start speaking the language. The problem is, no matter how much you prepare, how much you study, you’ll always feel like there’s more you could do to feel prepared. So in Benny’s opinion, the best way to tackle that situation is to decide you are ready on the very first day. You are going to make lots of mistakes. You just have to accept that.

The big problem which our learners are facing today is this one (i.e. what Benny Lewis states). Teachers are busy of feeding learners with theoretical (specially grammar rules) knowledge rather than engaging them in practical activities. Learners also always try to prepare themselves by learning more vocabularies and more grammar rules expecting that they will start using it soon/one day. That is why most of the students face some difficulty even to introduce themselves after they learn the language for 12 and more years. So, the experience shared by Benny seems acceptable.

2. Luca Lampariello



Luca speaks 14 languages at a very high level. His passion for languages is contagious and led him to a career as a Language coach. His first advice for those who want to learn any language is “*figuring out why you are learning that language.*” According to him, his 30 years’ experience of language learning taught him that the key to success in any language is your emotional connection with your target language. Making an emotional connection is a good tip in theory, but often proves more difficult to do in practice. He recommends “Grab a piece of paper and a pen and picture a person you are going to speak to in your target language. Think about the circumstances of your conversation, what you will talk about, where, why. Using the answers to these questions and the power of your mind, tell yourself a story!” He quoted Einstein’s saying “Imagination is more important than Knowledge” as knowledge is limited, whereas imagination embraces the entire world. According to him, one will make it to his/her destination every single time as long as he/she knows where he/she is headed and why.

3. Olly Richards



He is a polyglot with 8 languages under his control. He’s the creator of the “Story Learning” method, the basis for books and courses that teach people languages through stories. He’s also behind the “*I Will Teach You a Language*” blog.

His recommendation to language learners is just ‘selecting the right tools and spending time with it.’ According to him, one of the greatest success secrets of polyglots is that they understand how they personally learn best, and double down on it. Lots of people pick up the first book, course, or app they find and expect it to work. But in fact, exploring different resources and finding how what is most effective and enjoyable is a better use of your time. This strategy will get the best result in the long run. If you don’t feel comfortable with certain tools, try something else! Keep experimenting until you find something you like and that leads you to success.

4. Gabriel Gelman



Gabriel is the co-founder of “Spring Languages” and the founder of “Spracgheld”, one of the most-visited German language blogs. He speaks 6 languages and has a lot of knowledge to share about the most efficient ways to learn them. Gabriel’s very best tip for learning any language is to learn it in chunks rather than words. Chunks are full expressions that native speakers use all the time. Listening to the way native speakers talk and mimicking their turns of phrase is an easy and quick way to learn to speak foreign language. Some examples of chunks are something like “How’s it going”, “Most importantly..., what do you think about..., my favorite thing in the world. Etc.



5. Elisa Polese

She is an Italian polyglot who has studied 25 languages and teaches 13 of them. Her passion for language is contagious! She helps people from around the world start speaking their target language from **day one** and reaches their full learning potential. When she says “day one,” she really means it! that is why her website is called “Speak From Day One With Elisa.” According to Elisa “the main reason people do not reach their goals is that they throw in the towel at the first sight of adversity/difficulty.” One of her language learning mottos is “*If you are tired of starting over, stop giving up.*” According to her, get a little bit closer to your goal, you have to practice every single day, even if only for one minute, but she suggests 10-15 minutes language practice every single day. Trying to sit down and study for hours and hours every day is a great way to get burnt out, frustrated, and discouraged.



6. Steve Kaufmann

He is a former Canadian diplomat and current (hyper)polyglot who speaks more than 20 languages. He is the founder of “Lingg” and has inspired thousands of people, including other polyglots, with his videos about language. One of his best language-learning tips is “**Enjoy yourself in language learning.**” According to Steve, “*if there is one thing that all polyglots have in common, it is that they love the process of learning languages.*” “They have fun learning languages. They find it interesting, and they find ways to make it interesting. They listen to the content they enjoy, and the people’s voices they like. They read about grammar only when they are

curious, and when they know it will serve them. And they definitely don't let one teacher tell them what they have to learn and when they have to learn it. In summary, it all comes down to enjoyment. In other words, Steve recommends finding fun and interesting ways to learn.

7. Lydia Machova



She defines herself a passionate language learner, she always tries to manage one language every two years. She practice language as much time as she can to muster the language within two years. She is serving as in interpreter in many international conferences, and also serving as a language mentor in different universities. Moreover, she does not believe in learning language formally sitting in the classroom. That is why she always mentors her learners. According to her, *“The best time to learn start language was when you were a kid. The second best time is TODAY.”* She has four pillars of learning languages.

1. **Fun:** making language learning enjoyable to herself.
2. **Quantity:** she reads, listens, watches, & talks as much as she can.
3. **Frequency:** she practices language in small chunks frequently within a day.
4. **System:** she carefully identifies which language skill she has to develop first, next, and then, and give more emphasis to it.

In these ways she has mastered nine (9) languages, and giving mentor to 8 of them.

To sum up, from the experiences of the above polyglots, we need to remember their 7 key points in mind are: Start speaking from the first day; create an emotional connection with your target language; find the perfect learning tools for you; learn complete expressions from native speakers (in chunks); don't give up right away if it isn't working out, and study each and every single day; keep learning fun and enjoyable; Plan out how you will achieve your language goals.

In addition, polyglots like Frank Macri and John Fotheringham shared their experiences of language learning using self-directed method. The following are some of their advices:

- Immerse yourself in the community and/or immerse yourself in the learning using technology.

- *Focus on the Most Commonly Used Words and Expressions:* Instead of rote memorization of vocabulary to speak one language, it is better to Strategize and prioritize your learning by focusing on what matters. Studies show that in just about all languages, about 20% of the vocabulary accounts for 80% of understanding. So why waste time trying to learn all words?
- Be Patient During the Learning Process
- Be an Active Learner
- Be Passionate About Learning Language
- **Work with—Not Against—Your Psychology:** “In language learning, it is attitude, not aptitude, that determines success.” -Steve Kaufmann
- **Set S.M.A.R.T. goals:** For instance if I set the goal “within the coming few years, I will improve my English Language speaking proficiency.” This is Not SMARTgoal. Instead it is better if I say “Every night before I go to sleep, I will listen to authentic English Language speech whether it is music, movies, news, dramas, inspiration speeches and the like for 30 minutes.”
- **Embrace the process over the destination:** instead of picturing yourself crossing the finish line, visualize yourself actually running the race.
- **Choose inherently enjoyable learning activities**
- Design Your Environment to Maximize Language Input and Output:
- **Track Your Progress:** “What gets measured gets managed.” -Peter Drucker. We need to measure our progress in days, not in years.
- **Create a your own language learning Tribe:** Learning “By Yourself” Does Not Mean Learning “Alone”

4. Conclusion

The Roles of technology and media in self-directed language learning is crucial. The internet, computers and technologies in general offer so many possibilities to learn a language. Sim and Pop (2014:130) argue that technologies and media are “beneficial for foreign language learners, as it considerably builds confidence and increases learners’ interest in the topic.” Media include social media, streaming platforms and others.

Social media include chat forums, wikis, blogs, social networking etc., which make knowledge sharing easy and undisruptive for an individual. Users can easily express their

opinions, search others' opinions, get feedback, and simply be connected with others. One can choose from a variety of content, from talk shows such as Oprah and Jimmy Fallon, blogs & vlogs of YouTubers, to science documentaries. Most polyglots like to use streaming platforms such as Netflix for diversification of their studies, TV series are usually simple to understand, and they have repetitive dialogs. According to Sim and Pop (2014), to the question "Do you use any media to improve your language?", 95.4% polyglots responded "Yes." The type of media they use most is YouTube (92.6% respondent).

YouTube is full of not only videos that focus on language learning but also those so-called **vlogs** (i.e. videos from the daily life of a certain person), which can be used as a language learning tool. The use of YouTube videos can offer a real native speaker setting and therefore learners can access audio-visual materials that can enhance listening comprehension skills; moreover, it can also encourage learners' motivation (Kuo 2009). The second most used media platform was Facebook. Facebook is bountifully used as it is very interactive, improves writing skills, and promotes interaction besides other things (Başöz 2016). Other types of media mentioned by polyglots were blogs, podcasts, national television, watching TV with subtitles, broadcasting sites, and etc.

Generally, self-directed language learning in this technologically sophisticated world can be easy to apply even in formal classroom setting. It can also solve the current English language problems of our learners. If learners and teachers make technology work for them and immerse themselves in language learning, teaching-learning process will no longer be difficult, and they will go native without going abroad.

Conflict of Interest

The author declared that he has no conflict of interest

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