

Forming Language Learner's Autonomy Skills by Online Learning

Akbarova Guzal Xusnitdinovna ¹

¹ UzJMCU

Abstract:

Language learner autonomy, the ability to take control of one's own learning, is a crucial skill that empowers learners to become independent, self-regulated, and effective language learners. With the increasing prevalence of online learning, there is a growing need to explore how online platforms can be leveraged to promote learner autonomy. This article examines the potential of online learning to enhance language learner autonomy skills. It discusses the key components of learner autonomy, explores how online learning can support the development of these skills, and provides practical strategies for educators to promote learner autonomy in online language learning environments. The article also highlights the benefits of fostering learner autonomy and discusses the challenges and considerations involved in implementing autonomous learning practices in online language learning contexts. This article aims to provide insights and recommendations for educators seeking to promote learner autonomy through online learning.

Keywords: learner autonomy; online environments; language learning; case study.

Language learning autonomy has become an increasingly important concept in language education, as it empowers learners to take control of their learning process. Online learning platforms offer a variety of tools and resources that can be leveraged to promote autonomy in language learners. This article explores the concept of language learning autonomy and discusses how online learning can be used to enhance autonomy skills in language learners.

Learner autonomy which requires a transition from teacher-control to learner-control is viewed as a prerequisite for success in learning. The shift of locus of control to learners reflects changes in education towards a more learner-centred teaching and learning where learners are expected to assume greater responsibility for, and take charge of, their own learning. With the advent of technologies, learners are faced with unprecedented opportunities to conduct independent learning.

Educational technologies, e.g. Moodle, Blackboard, Screencasting, MOOCs etc. (see Bustamante, Hurlbut & Moeller (2012) for details) have extended learners' access to learning into their own time and space. An examination of the literature indicates a clear need for a study investigating how learners engage in the self-initiated use of technologies to facilitate their language learning (Reinders & White, 2016). This research study aims to fill in the gap in the literature, examining how learner autonomy intertwined and evolved with the modal affordances of technology-mediated environments.

This study is significant in theory and practice. Theoretically, the empirical evidence provided by the study will contribute to our understanding of different facets of learner autonomy in online environments and throw light on affordances of technologies for learner autonomy. More practically, findings from the study may help educators develop appropriate curricula and create optimal learning conditions for learners to exercise agency in their learning. Despite a unified recognition of the importance of learner autonomy in education, there is little consensus in terms of its definition. The first and most frequently cited definition was proposed by Holec (1981) who defines learner autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning". There are two key elements in this definition.

Language learning autonomy refers to the ability of learners to take responsibility for their own learning process. Autonomous learners are proactive, self-directed, and motivated to learn. They set their own learning goals, monitor their progress, and evaluate their learning strategies. Autonomy is not about learning in isolation; rather, it is about learners taking an active role in their learning process, with the support of teachers and peers.

It is surprising how often learners have no clear idea of their language needs, and the discrepancies that exist between what learners think they need and where their actual weaknesses lie. Equally worryingly, many learners have little idea of their learning needs (Barcelos, 2008).

Of course, learning is not only a cognitive but also an eminently social process. Interaction and collaboration are now seen as crucial to the development of autonomy (van Lier, 1996; Schwienhorst, 2008)

Strategies for Promoting Language Learning Autonomy in Online Learning Environments

- a. **Setting Clear Learning Objectives:** Encourage learners to set clear, achievable learning objectives that align with their interests and goals.
- b. **Providing Choice:** Offer learners a variety of learning activities and resources to choose from, allowing them to tailor their learning experience to their preferences.
- c. **Encouraging Reflection:** Encourage learners to reflect on their learning experiences, identifying what worked well and what could be improved.
- d. **Fostering Collaboration:** Create opportunities for learners to collaborate with peers, such as through group projects or online discussions, to enhance their learning experience.
- e. **Providing Feedback:** Provide timely and constructive feedback to learners, helping them to monitor their progress and adjust their learning strategies accordingly. The interest in both language learning strategies and learner autonomy is mainly driven by a desire to understand the characteristics of good language learners because good language learners are supposed to take conscious actions to improve and control their language learning (Oxford et al., 2014). Thus, understanding the characteristics of good language learners is important because once the characteristics are understood, teachers can explore the potential for learner training and approach their students with helpful well-designed tasks to help their students become better language learners (Sewell, 2003).

Regarding modernization, ICT provided society with advanced standards in the context of global information (Ling et al., 2020) and supported the educational environment (Herzog et al., 2018). For instance, the development of multimedia education and e-learning has led to diverse teaching approaches and increased computer literacy for both students and teachers (Mital' et al., 2021). ICT integration in language classrooms makes language classes more interactive, flexible, and innovative due to various online resources as tools for valuable professional development (Cosgun & Savas, 2019). Teachers must integrate appropriate technology tools into instructional content and processes, support learners' thinking skills, and design effective technology uses across contexts and populations to address this issue (Asiri et al., 2021)

Digitally literate teachers play a crucial role in enhancing language learning through technology integration. By integrating ICT tools effectively, encouraging critical thinking skills and problem-solving, and considering learning contexts and student levels, teachers can support students' language learning efficiently and effectively

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