



LEARNING TO LEARN DIGITALLY:
TEACHING LEARNER AUTONOMY TO BETTER
NAVIGATE REMOTE AND MOBILE LEARNING

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Importance of teaching autonomous learning

- **Important in online learning and for lifelong learning**
 - **Online learning - the pandemic** limited in person instruction **forcing** online learning, limiting interaction and **increasing the need for more student independence**
 - **Lifelong learning** - After formal schooling ends independent learning is the norm
 - Teaching autonomy is training for a **life of learning fulfillment**
- **Learning independently is key** to student's success in online/remote learning and their future learning challenges

Definition of autonomous/intependent learning

- **Autonomous and independent learning** are treated as the **same**.
- **Learner autonomy** is generally considered **the ability to initiate, organize and control one's own learning**
 - **A definition** of autonomous language learning is quite **problematic**. A “slippery” concept that is hard to define precisely. Yet, there is agreement that **learners should understand the need for autonomy, accept responsibility, set goals, plan, execute, review and evaluate their progress, in other words, look at their learning critically**. (Little,2002)
- **Autonomy is not a dichotomy but continuum** with varying degrees of independence that **students can learn** and move towards being able to learn on their own as they will be required to as they become adults.

Barriers to autonomy

- **Students**

- Are **dependent** on interpersonal relationship in **classroom**
- Are **dependent** on **step-by-step instruction**
- See a teacher as the holder of **knowledge**
- **Expect to be taught** this knowledge, not sent out on their own
- Students **don't know how** to learn on their own
 - Given little chance to be independence
- Students **don't know where** to get resources
 - Online & Digital learning makes it easy to access multimedia content suited to the individual learn

Degrees of learner autonomy

- **Self-instruction, self-direction, and autonomy.** These range from slight freedom in the classroom with a student working independently to full autonomous learning with no outside input. (Dickinson,1987)
- **Teaching autonomy is more effective in later stages of learning** as students mature.
 - Stages and ability to learn autonomously are dependent on **maturity**.
 - **Younger learners need more attention**, older mature students can move towards full autonomy

Types of learners & learning styles

What kind of learner are you?

- **Learning styles** are the **cognitive, affective, and physiological** factors that influence learners
 - **visual** learning (pictures, movies, maps and charts)
 - **auditory** learning (music, conversation, lectures),
 - **reading and writing** (reading, making lists, taking notes)
 - **kinesthetic** learning (movement, experiments, hands-on activities)
- **Self-awareness training** – in class students become aware of their personal learning preferences
- **Multimedia resources** cater to the many ways learners learn
 - Students respond well to the multiple forms of linguistic input available with multimedia

Teaching about learning styles

- **Increase the self-awareness** of students and enlighten them about their strengths and weaknesses as learners
- **Encourage discussion** and exploration of how students learn
 - Students should have the opportunity to **talk about ways they prefer** to learn, **share how they learn with others**, understand there are **different ways of learning**, be **sensitive to the different styles** of others and encourage students to be **confident in their own learning styles**. Scharle and Szabo (2000)

Learning style in the classroom

1. Learners who are more **conscious of their learning styles** make better use of learning opportunities. =>Teach about learning styles
2. Learners need **learning opportunities that enhance and extend their learning preferences**. =>Teach about online resources that can match their learning style
3. Learners work better with **new learning styles** when they are given guided opportunities to **practice** them. =>Practice in class first then independently

(Ngeow, 1999, pp. 302-303)

Cultural expectations in the classroom

- **Western concept** -Teacher should remember that learner autonomy are in many cases western concepts.
- **Are you doing your job?** - Students may feel their **teacher is not doing his or her job** by not 'teaching' or telling students what they should do and learn.
- **Work with and respect the culture** - Establish a framework for autonomous learning that can **work in conjunction with cultural values.**

To sum up

Teacher-student roles related to autonomy

- **Respect** and work with **cultural expectations** of learners
- **A teacher can give guidance** to young learners, **teach how** to learn autonomously, **share resources** and point the way
- Make students aware of the **degrees of autonomy**
- **Encourage and expect more and more independence** as students get more mature.
 - Learners should show increasingly more **independence, organization and control** of their own learning.

A class focusing on independent online language learning in 3 parts

1. Elements of autonomy and Online Resources for language learning

- **Online resources** - podcasts, movies, language learning sites, native speaker sites, **emphasizing watch - listen - read** - sites where student can see content, here recordings and read transcripts
- **Elements of autonomy** (more below)
 - **Degrees** of autonomy
 - **Types of learners** - self-awareness
 - **Being proactive** - taking control and responsibility for learning
 - **Success research applied to learning** - meaning, results, fulfillment, challenge, recognition, the greater good (Duckworth, 2016)

2. Personal language learning project - Documentation of learning - Individual interviews

- **weekly meetings** where we discuss content, goals, notebooks, progress, methods, processes, etc.
 - **Goals** - short and long
 - **Habits** - morning, noon and night, when - where - how,
 - **Self-testing** - measuring progress and seeing progress
 - **Self study promise**

3. Presentations - sharing learning experiences

- **Sharing learning experiences** - As a class students discussed needs, goals and shared individual language learning methods.
- **Personal and shared language learning promise-** keeping a promise is easier if it is shared

Key elements of learner autonomy for the classroom #1

Students should:

- **Have goals** - learners must have a **language-learning target** in mind.
 - **Short-term goals** - **each time they study**, 5 minutes to 1-2 hours, i.e., complete an article, do a self-test
 - **Long term goals** - month(s), semester, year, i.e., raising a test scores, overseas travel etc.
 - **Goals can change** - should always be something you **strive for**
 - **Goals** should be **attainable** - **not so difficult** that not reaching them is discouraging
- **Have a positive attitude**—a positive attitude towards **learning in general** and the **target language** and **culture** are important for success in language learning.

Key elements of learner autonomy for the classroom #2

Students should:

- **Have a willingness for interaction**—the independent learner must seek out people to interact with.
- **Have an intuitive understanding**—an autonomous language learner should have an insight into what to do next.
- **Have a knowledge of degrees**—the learner should know that there are steps from fully dependent on a teacher to fully independent. And also steps in the language learning process.
- **Know language learning is a personal act**—no one is going to do it for you but others can help. Also each individual will have a unique approach and different learning style. They also need to know that some students will learn faster and others slower.

Key elements of learner autonomy for the classroom #3

Students should:

- **Have a knowledge of efficiency**—there are efficient ways and inefficient ways to learn. Be aware of **wasting time**.
- **Be risk takers**—students will meet **success and failure** but should be willing to **laugh at and learn from mistakes**.
- **Have wisdom**—as you get older your needs, willingness and ability to be an autonomous language learner increases.
- **Have knowledge of the tools**—students need to be aware of the tools (**traditional and technological**) available to enhance language learning.

Key elements of learner autonomy for the classroom #4

Students should:

- **Be proactive**—students need to put themselves in **language-learning situations** and **seek out new knowledge**.
- **Know learners learn at their own pace**—some students will learn faster and others will learn slower.
- **Act independently**— become more and more independent and learn to rely less and less on a teacher. But know they can **work with others**.
- Have an **interest in and enjoyment of** what they are **learning**.

(adapted from Scharle and Szabo, 2000)

What works best in class

- **Awareness** - self, learning style, strengths, weaknesses,
- **Proactive** - getting students to take control of their learning
- **Study Goals & Habits**- short (5 minutes+) & long (months) Doable, attainable, consistent.
- **Enjoy the content** - if not to find something else
- **Study promise** - recorded and shared
- **Self-testing** - graphing progress
- **Personal language learning project** - documentation of learning - individual interviews
- **Shared learning/shared ideas** - discussions, presentations, gives students confidence
- **Sites and applications** for independent online and mobile learning
 - **Ask student to find their own** - Give them the basics, NPR, BBC, then ask them to act independently and show them how to search for language learning sites they like
 - Media content can **match students interests** and **at all levels**
 - **Watch - listen - read** sites i.e., NPR, BBC,

Elements of autonomous language learning can be introduced into **any class**.

In conclusion

Suggestions for empowering student independence

- **Teaching and encouraging independent language learning skills promote learner autonomy** at home and at school.
- **Empirical research & anecdotal evidence** seen in class suggest that students had a richer language learning experience when information was presented in an authentic hypermedia format - audio, visual, interactive
 - Nearly all students have **language learning assistants** in their pockets
 - Teach how to use them
 - **Students used mobile learning** platforms most often
 - Can be used anytime and anywhere

Future of online autonomous/independent learning

- **Not going away** online remote learning was advancing slowly but the pandemic moved online learning into **fast forward**
- **Find the sweet spot** between **online** computer mediated education (CME) and in person **classroom** learning
- **More tools and more opportunity** CMC/CME/Online/Autonomous learning can **enhance classroom learning** with easy access and rich customizable content
- **Mobile learning enables learning anytime - anywhere** students have access to a web of learning in their pockets

Learning about autonomous language learning empowers students with the skills to become better language learners

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