

# Self-Directed Learning for L2 learners: A Study in Teacher Attitude

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## Abstract

Language learning is a process that demands the learners' responsibility and interest, today. Learner-centered learning is the trend of the day despite its practice not rooted strong. Pedagogy is the system of learning that has been for years where the teachers disseminate the information to the learners and engage them in learning a language. The learners are dependent on the teachers for information and learning. Pedagogy will remain futile if it does not transform into Andragogy which is adult learning but Self-directed learning in terms of English Language Learning. SDL directs the students to the next level of independent learning for which technology has developed accessible resources. If SDL is invited to Indian Classrooms, the responses of teachers might vary. As the prevailing conditions prove that students are ready to have control over their learning, the instructors might have varied opinions of this system of language learning. This paper analyses the attitude of teachers in implementing SDL in language classrooms.

**Keywords:** *Learner-centred learning, Pedagogy, Andragogy, Self-directed learning.*

## Introduction

Times have changed when the learners followed the teacher's instructions. Over a period of time, the learners have imbibed a learning mechanism within themselves that seeks independent learning. The learners try to understand their own need for the language and take control of their learning. In an article titled, "A Study on Andragogy & Heutagogy in Adult Education with Reference to Bloom's Taxonomy" Dr.Umashankar and Charitra (2016) identify the changing system of education and term the current model of learning as professional learning.

They provide the results of an experimental study of how learners opt for learner-centric lifelong learning methodologies. In addition to the learners' decisions, the teachers have to adapt themselves to the respective scenario. The teachers have to let go of the students to work and self-evaluate. Though it does not mean, the role of teachers is nothing. It adds up to the already existing roles of the teachers. The teachers have to shift to mentors, facilitators, and collaborators. The upcoming teachers might find it easy to evolve but the teachers who have been trained in pedagogy might find the opposite - a comfortable zone. The objective of this attitudinal study is to understand the perceptions of language teachers towards the adoption of Self-directed learning schemes and the feasibility of such schemes.

## Review of Literature

"Student Perspectives of Self-Directed Language Learning: Implications for

Teaching and Research"(2013) by Fengning Du is an article that analysed the experiences of CSL( Chinese as a Second Language) students in the SDL framework of project work. Du talks about the role of students and teachers to prefer SDL in the fast pacing world of technology. He highlights the skills acquired using SDL method apart from effective language acquisition including meta-cognition and critical thinking. His study has collected responses from the students on the benefits of engaging in SDL, the role of teachers, and the reasons for the variance in performances.

Desy Mutia Sari and Ashadi Ashadi(2020) identified that there is less awareness of self-directed learning among graduate students. Though there were not many theoretical insights, the graduates showed signs of a confident attitude towards self-directed learning.

## Research Questions

Following are the research questions that this study seeks answers to.

1. How important is the attitude of teachers in SDL?
2. What can be the limitations for the teachers in implementing SDL?
3. How well do the teachers agree to the precepts of SDL?
4. What do the teachers disagree with?
5. How can they adapt to SDL?

Andragogy which was coined in the early 80s by Alexander Kapp was adapted as a theory in the field of adult education by a German historian and philosopher Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy. The theory was advanced by Malcolm Knowles in America. He proposed six assumptions to adult learning for adult learners. The assumptions underline the responsibility of the learners to create a vibrant space for themselves for learning.

Self-Directed Learning is not independent learning possible only outside the classroom. There is more to the term. "Self-directed learning describes 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" (Knowles, 1975, p. 18). The learners have to find out their path and destination which are the needs, methods, and goals of learning a language. The learners will need a company to diagnose the needs, fix goals, identify sources, and practise learning in the initial stages of learning. Therefore, the learners will need the guidance of teachers in making their learning effective.

The teachers are more or less maps to the understanding of self-learning. Depending on the skill-sets of GenZ learners, a 20<sup>th</sup>-century educator is expected to do the following roles: the adaptor, the communicator, the learner, the visionary, the leader, the model, the collaborator, and the risk-taker. In short, educators should be self-directed learners first. The teacher is supposed to become a model for a set of learners. A lot depends on the attitude of a teacher towards language learning in the present times. The present times refer to the prevailing situations that provide scope for maximum use of technology and minimum use of conservative methods of pedagogy. Therefore, this study attempts to explore the mindsets and chances of adaptability of present teachers.

## Research Methodology

An online survey was conducted for language teachers of different age groups between 25 and 50. The teachers responded to the statements based on the involvement of teachers and learners today in Self-directed Learning. Five statements based on learners' responsibility to learn and five statements on teachers' role in providing academic freedom were given.

## Reflections

The teachers irrespective of the age groups agree that the learners should take responsibility in learning the language and being aware of the goals and needs. They also take sides with the learners' freedom to learn a language. Yet, there is a mixed response to the statement: "learners' interests are more important to teachers' involvement". 30 percent of the participants are not sure whether to agree or disagree despite the fact nobody disapproves of this statement. This kind of response throws light on the idea of teachers' assistance in the process of learning.

Concerning the teacher's role in a classroom, the responses are positive. Many welcome the roles of facilitators and collaborators. A few disagree with providing control to the learners to learn. But most of them agree to grant an interactive space in the classroom.

The teachers are not willing to let go of the learners to an unknown destination of learning. They want to be a part of every learner's process of learning. Nevertheless, the learners find it hard without the guidance of the teachers. Their guidance is much needed for an ordinary learner to transform into a self-directed learner. The collaboration of teachers with learners will enhance the quality of learning a language.

The learners are fast-paced and well-versed with technology. But still, the learners are dependent on teachers on various aspects of learning. The learning resources are accessible to the learners but they require assistance in choosing authentic and apt resources that match their learning needs since the knowledge explosion has resulted in a lack of authenticity. The learning style is another important factor that entails selecting the right sources for learning. The learners with their lack of experience will find it hard to locate the right resources. Therefore, the teachers' role is significant even to the initiating process of learning which is locating content and method. External motivation is a necessity to sustain learning. Teachers as facilitators motivate learners in the path of development. So, it is improbable to untie the knot of teacher-student collaboration especially in self-directed learning which places motivation and learning orientation equal to readiness to learn and prior experience.

This attitudinal study reflects the interest of teachers to help learners in every way possible. It also stresses the learners' maximum participation in learning to the extent of sharing and interaction of ideas. This collaboration is far from teacher-centered learning that aims at equal workload and sometimes more effort from the side of the learners. Therefore, the study shows a positive sign to the method of self-directed learning in language acquisition. This study is also applicable to learning subjects in addition to language acquisition.

## Conclusion

The competitive world today is interested to recruit candidates who are flexible enough to upgrade themselves according to the times. In terms of language learning, candidates are expected to be self-determined learners who never stop learning. Self-determined learning is also known as Heutagogy or lifelong learning. Stewart Hase(2000) suggests that self-directed learning is a subset of self-determined learning. He also recommends the teachers to focus on higher-order activities such as letting people learn and getting out of the way and acting as a guiding hand in a Socratic walk in the park. The learning is complete only when the learners learn how to learn even in the absence of teachers. To achieve this goal, self-directed learning is the first and foremost step for the learners to get the maximum input from the teachers and to create their way to determine lifelong learning.

**Abbreviations used:** SDL – Self-Directed Learning, CSL – Chinese as a Second Language

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