



Autonomous learning practices of extrovert and introvert EFL learners

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Learning autonomy has been widely seen as a key predictor of a language learning success. There have been many studies on learning autonomy, however, most studies do not investigate how students conduct their autonomous learning. The number of those which investigate how learning autonomy is implemented across personality type is even fewer. To address it, this article elaborates how extrovert and introvert students managed their autonomous learning. The objectives of this article are to reveal how extrovert and introvert learners perceive autonomous learning and to find out the types of activities which were done by the extrovert and introvert learners and their reasons for doing the activities. Interviews and observation were applied to collect data. The findings indicate that autonomous learning was carried out differently by both personality types. Introvert students devoted more time and focused on their solitude learning and were more organized in doing it. On the other hand, extrovert learners chose to do the autonomous learning in groups. For them, learning in a community gave more benefits and prevented them from making fossilized errors. This article also reveals that the students from both personality types used digital technology in learning independently. Yet, extrovert and introvert students used different kinds of technology and way in using it.

Keywords: autonomous learning, practices, personality type, extrovert, introvert

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INTRODUCTION

Researchers have sought to look into factors other than skills which can help account for L2 learning achievement ([Dornyei, 2005](#); [Nosratinia & Zaker, 2015](#)). Of the factors, learner autonomy (LA) has been widely seen as the key predictor of L2 learning success. LA is defined as “the capacity to control one’s own learning” ([Benson, 2013](#)). The control over learning includes learning management, cognitive processes and learning materials ([Chasmar & Benson, 2016](#)).

Autonomous learners take greater responsibility in setting goals, determining the materials, regulating learning pace, self-reflecting and self-evaluating their language learning ([Teng & He, 2015](#)). Despite emphasizing learners’ active participation, LA should not be seen as self-instruction, making the teacher redundant. Teachers’ presence is still needed to facilitate students in developing their ability to learn autonomously and raising their metacognitive awareness through strategy training ([Nguyen & Gu, 2013](#)) and provision of self-access facilities ([Wichayathian & Reinders, 2015](#)).

Autonomy gives a sense of agency for language learners. With such sense, the learners are able to “speak as themselves” in performing varied learning activities in and out of classroom practices ([Ushioda, 2010](#)). The students make strategic decisions in the learning process when and where any need arises for doing so ([Gao, 2010](#); [Jacobs & Renandya, 2016](#); [Zhang, 2017](#)).

As learning L2 is not a linear process and not only classroom-based learning, the students have to actively seek alternative ways and opportunities to improve their L2 ability beyond classroom ([Benson, 2013](#), [Chik, Aoki, & Smith, 2017](#)). Therefore, autonomous learners need to make informed decisions in doing so, and they have to be metacognitive aware of the learning processes and their own capacity ([Nguyen & Gu, 2013](#); [Teng, 2019](#)).

Considerable evidences from numerous studies has consistently suggested that learning autonomy affects active participation in classroom activities ([Egan, 2017](#); [Gonzalez-Gascon & Aljaro Palacios, 2013](#); [Johnson & Arunachalam, 2013](#)) and enhances responsibility for learning ([Deed, 2010](#); [Sadeghi & Khezrlou, 2014](#); [Salter & AARE, 2012](#)). Learning autonomy will allow learners to take on active roles in regulating their own learning processes through exercising learning strategies ([Kumaravadivelu, 2003](#)). Past research has also suggested that learners with greater autonomy have a capacity in managing their affects and demonstrate a greater degree of motivation, which then could lead to better learning achievement ([Lee, 2017](#); [Takagi, 2003](#); [Ushioda, 2010](#)). With greater intrinsic motivation, the learners are better at determining the learning goal and being responsible for the outcome ([Baars, Wijnia, & Paas, 2017](#); [Ferla, Valcke, & Schuyten, 2010](#)).

Despite many studies on learning autonomy, few have looked into autonomous behaviors of L2 learners with different personality traits. Some researchers have revealed that personality trait of language learners affect the way they approach language learning and tasks, especially strategy use ([Chen & Hung, 2012](#); [Noprianto, 2017](#)). Other studies have pointed to inconclusive findings on the link between introversion-extroversion personality types and language skills or achievements ([Cahyono & Mutiaraningrum, 2016](#); [Hajimohammadi & Mukundan, 2011](#); [Sutrisno, Rasyid, & Rahmat, 2018](#)). Further, those studies have mainly approached the data quantitatively. However, the way extrovert and introvert learners conduct their learning, especially the autonomous one, is still barely investigated. In order to address it, this current inquiry explored the practices of autonomous learning among introvert and extrovert learners based on qualitative data. Specifically, this study mainly focuses on: 1) the types of autonomous learning activities which are done by the extrovert and introvert learners and their reasons for doing the activities; 2) how extrovert and introvert learners perceive autonomous learning.

METHODS

This study was conducted on two groups of university students. One group consisted of extrovert students and the other group consisted of the introvert ones.

Each group consisted of a male student and a female student. They were chosen as the participants because during the preliminary observation they were able to show that they were self-directed in doing their learning and indicate

different personality traits that lead to different learning behaviors. The preliminary observation was carried out during regular teaching and learning process in which their daily behavior. A personality test under Myers-Briggs system was used to check the students' extroversion and introversion. There were 21 questions that should be answered by the students. Their answers determine whether they belong to extrovert type or introvert type. Answers which focus on outer world indicated extroversion whereas answers which focus on inner world indicated introversion. The result of this test confirmed that the prediction on the students' personality traits was correct. Then, the students were labeled with the following codes to ease the presentation of the findings and the discussion. The first extrovert student was labeled XA. The other extrovert student was labeled XB. The introvert students were labeled IA and IB.

To reveal the students' autonomous learning practice, series of in depth and open-ended interviews were conducted. The interviews were carried out based on an interview guide who consisted of two sections in accordance with the research questions; they are (1) the extrovert and introvert learners' perception of autonomous learning and (2) the types of autonomous learning activities which are done by the extrovert and the introvert learners. The interview was retrospective and introspective in nature in which the students were asked some questions and required to recall and reflect on what they usually do in implementing autonomous learning. The questions were about how they usually learn English, with whom they learn English, when and where they did the learning, how they perceive learning English individually, why they chose to learn individually, and what impact they got from learning individually. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and lasted about 60-90 minutes. All of the interviews were recorded and transcribed in summary form. To assure that the data obtained were consistent, the interviews were done three times for each student, to confirm whether the data obtained from them was true or not, triangulation was carried out by questioning people who are attached to them. Additional observations were done to check the students' answers in the interviews. The observations were carried out mainly outside classroom. It was carried out by seeing the students' involvement in the learning community available at campus.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study are presented based on the two research questions. Thus, the findings and discussion are presented under two subheadings. The first is the types of autonomous learning activities which were done by the extrovert and the introvert learners and their reasons in doing it. The second one is the elaboration on the perception of extrovert and introvert learners on autonomous learning.

The types of autonomous activities which are done by the extrovert and the introvert learners

The students of both groups utilized the availability of digital sources to conduct their independent learning. Movies on internet, YouTube files, English learning websites, and TV cable programs were the most materials they used. In their opinion, these materials were interesting, easy to access, and helpful to learn English. Since the materials are all on screen, the activities they did mostly involve their eyes, ears, and lips. In doing the activities, they simply sat before their laptops or television set. IA mostly used films she found in Netflix for her autonomous learning. She found the films which she considered interesting from film reviews and ratings. She would try to watch the recommended film to find out whether it was really interesting or not. Once she decided that the film was worth watching, she would continue watching the film till the end. She was willing to watch the same film repeatedly for her learning purpose.

There were three main things she claimed she learned from the films she watched. First, she learned actual English expressions that she could not find in English textbooks. Dealing with it, she applied note-taking method. As she has watched the film many times, she had no burden to pause, rewind, and note any expressions she considered interesting in her notebook. She noticed that the expressions were embedded to culture. Thus, by learning the expressions, she learned the culture as well. It gave her knowledge on when a particular expression could be used properly. The third thing she learned from the film was pronunciation. To learn pronunciation, she paused and imitated the way the actor or actress pronounced the words. She did it many times until she believed that her way of pronouncing was the same as the pronunciation of the actor and the actress she imitated. She, therefore, learned what to say, how to say, and when to say the expressions.

IB applied more various materials in implementing his autonomous learning. His main sources were YouTube and BBC learning English website. Different from IF, IB preferred to watch documentary and talk show in YouTube. TED talk was his favorite. He stated that he got a lot of benefits from watching that show. He found many sophisticated words that he could use in his campus assignments. Similar to IF, he also took a note on interesting words he found. For him, taking note was good to help him memorize the words. Yet, different from IF, in watching films, IM did not repeat and pause the films. He simply watched, enjoyed, and took note only when he found rarely used and sophisticated words or expressions. As stated previously, IB also learned from BBC learning English website. He liked it because he believed that this website provided him learning sources that support his study in English Department. At least, according to him, he learned British English from it.

Different from the introvert group, the extrovert group could not elaborate the autonomous learning activities they did clearly, especially the activities which were done solitary. They did not implement a particular routine in

doing the autonomous learning. The extrovert students said that they did it only when they had mood to do it. In terms of materials and activities, they did not have particular preferences as well. The choice was based mostly on their mood at the time they were about to do it.

Student XA did not set any particular independent practice. She simply watched YouTube videos randomly or searched for any podcast and stopped when she found something she thought interesting. She believed that learning English alone may lead to misunderstanding and fossilized errors. She gave example about error in pronouncing a word. When she studied together with other students, she had people to remind and corrected her error, therefore, her error would not be fossilized. This perception prevented her from doing solitude autonomous learning. She did not enjoy learning English alone. She did not feel that learning English that way was fun at all. Thus, she preferred to get involved in English learning communities. Luckily, she could join an English learning community at her campus in which she could find some friends to practice English with.

XB conducted different autonomous learning activities. Watching TV program was his choice to boost his English ability. He chose Discovery Channel programs as his learning source. He usually watched it at night when he had no campus assignment to do. Different from the students from introvert group who took note on interesting words, XB did not take a note. He simply watched and enjoyed the program. He believed that he did not have to take a note because he watched Discovery Channel programs frequently so that he was sure that he would find the words repeated by the program itself, and in the end, he would automatically memorize the words. XB believed that by watching the program quite frequently, he had adequate encounter of English which would support his English learning. However, just like XA, he still preferred to practice English with more people by joining English learning community. Moreover, he did not watch the TV program regularly. As mentioned before, this student relied on his mood in doing it.

The facts above showed that although both personality types utilize digital technology in their autonomous learning, the introvert students were more thoughtful in choosing the learning materials. They also used the materials differently from the extrovert students. The introvert students were willing to reuse materials deliberately and repeat their activities until they felt that they had adequate learning and explored the material deeply. The extrovert students chose their learning materials more randomly and applied unspecific activities in their autonomous learning.

The result of this study indicates that introvert students are more self-directed and eager to do autonomous learning, especially the solitude one. Their perception that autonomous learning is beneficial for their learning progress makes them willing to spend time to learn independently. The introvert students' better self-direction in doing autonomous learning is closely related to their perception and motivation. This is in line with Liu's finding (Liu, 2015) that autonomy and engagement in implementing autonomous learning have a high level of positive

correlation with motivation. Hence, it can be concluded that the introvert students have higher level of motivation in doing the autonomous learning than the extrovert students. From their answers in the interviews, it can be inferred that the introvert students' motivation is to develop their skills especially dealing with English components like vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. Since they believe that learning autonomously will be able to help them to improve those components, their motivation to learn independently eventually increases. It is also in line with prior studies which indicate learners with greater autonomy to demonstrate a greater degree of motivation, which enables them to achieve better learning result (Takagi, 2003). Similarly, (Brown, 2007) states that intrinsic motivation leads learners to be better at determining the learning goal and being responsible for the learning outcome.

The introvert learners were more organized in managing their autonomous learning than the extrovert learners. The extrovert students did not really apply a specific strategy in implementing learning autonomy whereas learning autonomy enables learners to take on active roles in regulating their own learning processes through exercising learning strategies (Benson, 2013; Kumaravadivelu, 2003). It indicates that introvert learners had more active roles in their independent learning. They selected and applied particular strategies in learning independently. In learning pronunciation, for instance, they were willing to stop and pause the video and/or audio in order that they could imitate and eventually produce the words properly. It meets the statements of Jacobs & Power (2016) and Zhang (2017) that the students make strategic decisions in the learning process when and where any need arises for doing so. Their clear needs to be able to pronounce well make them chose the strategy. It also indicates that in implementing autonomous learning, the introvert learners were more aware of their metacognitive strategy. It is in line with Nguyen & Gu (2013) and Teng (2019) who state that autonomous learners have to be metacognitive aware of the learning processes and their own capacity.

The findings also support previous studies which suggest that learning autonomy enhances responsibility for learning (Deed, 2010; Sadeghi & Khezrlou, 2014; Salter & AARE, 2012). Both personality types observed in this research showed that they were responsible for their own learning. No one urged the students to do the English learning. No one forced them to apply autonomous learning. Yet, they did the learning of English autonomously and were responsible with it. They were self-motivated in conducting the learning. Although the frequency of the learning and the strategies the introvert and the extrovert learners were different, they were all responsible in doing their autonomous learning.

Extrovert and introvert learners' perception of autonomous learning

Each student from both personality traits managed different ways in conducting autonomous learning. The introvert students showed more organized pattern in learning autonomously in which they did not rely on their mood to

conduct the learning activities and they preferred to learn English alone. On the contrary, the extrovert students show more random pattern in conducting autonomous learning. It mainly occurred because they did the learning mostly based on their mood. Besides, the extrovert students did not enjoy learning alone. They need to mingle or join in a learning community to make them enjoy the learning.

Students who belong to the same group provided similar tendency, though. Extrovert students like XA and XB relied on society more than introvert students like IA and IB. Autonomous learning seems to be done more eagerly by introvert students. XA believes that learning alone is not beneficial for her due to the non-existence of responses and feedbacks from others. She mentioned the possibility for being fossilized in errors as an impact of it. Making errors is common thing in learning but if there is no one that reminds her about the errors, she feels that her learning is not satisfying. She is afraid that she will never get any improvement if she learns English alone. She also stated that learning together with other students give her better opportunity to practice English in real communication and sharpen her ability to speak in English. She is more confident in learning English when she practices it in groups because she has someone with better English to correct her anytime, she produces errors. She can also get direct vocabulary assistance whenever she needs it during her practice together with a friend or more.

Similarly, XB stated that learning English gives best result when it is done in a learning community. There will be people who give real and spontaneous responses which challenge him to be ready with any impromptu appropriate replies. Learning alone for him does not give him such challenge. This student believes that this particular challenge is valuable and worth taking. For those reasons, he claims that joining English learning community is the best way to improve English ability. Yet, for different learning purpose, he still enjoys learning English alone.

The students who belong to the introvert group responded differently. They believe that learning autonomously is as good as learning in English community. For them, regular practices and persistence are the keys to be successful English learners. The non-existence of teachers during their autonomous learning does not reduce their confident that they will be able to accomplish their learning goals.

IA is a very shy and silent student who believes that her persistence and efforts to practice English regularly in daily basis are able to give her maximum learning progress. She is very confident about it. As an introvert person, joining English learning community is not a pleasant idea for her. Feedbacks from others could become a threat for her. Such anxiety prevents her from being active in English learning community. Learning English is fun for her when she is alone and has time to explore the learning materials she has. She is sure that her way of learning has provided her with abundance learning input which influence her English and enable her to have significant progress.

IB provided a bit different information. Although he is introvert, he does not mind to get involved in English learning community. He believes that doing both autonomous learning and joining learning community will give him the most benefit. Dealing with autonomous learning implementation, he enjoys it a lot. Compared to the other students in this study, he is the one who is the most organized in managing his autonomous learning. He is also the one who seems to be the most self-directed in doing it. It has been his habit for long time to learn autonomously so that he is confident about the power of autonomous learning to improve English ability. Regarding the students' perception on autonomous learning, in terms of the amount of time spent for learning independently, introvert students perceive that devoting more time for this way of learning is an essential thing to do. They can sit still for hours to practice themselves. They do not feel that it is a burden for them. Both students in introvert group set daily practice schedule to do their autonomous learning. IA chooses to do it at night before going to bed while IB prefers to do it earlier i.e. after he arrives home from campus. Both say that this practice makes them relax and contented.

On the contrary, for the extrovert students, learning English without companion generates boredom easily. Therefore, they spend much less time to conduct autonomous learning. Although the two extrovert students in this study apply autonomous learning, they do not set up particular schedules to do it. They simply follow their mood. Hence, they will do it only when they have mood to do it. They do not set a specific time. As long as they feel like doing it, they will just simply do it. Their way is less organized compared to that of the introvert students.

The facts above confirm the fact that extrovert students perceive autonomous learning, particularly learning alone beyond a learning community as less beneficial than learning in a community. For them, learning community gives many benefits, especially in making them to speak more fluently. It is in line with previous study which states that leaning community improves student's speaking ability (Regency & Sulawesi, 2018; Wu, Hsieh, & Yang, 2017) Learning without a teacher is considered as depriving their opportunities to learn a lot and to prevent fossilized errors. As a result of this thought, extrovert students spend less time in doing autonomous learning and were not engaged in their autonomous learning. On the contrary, introvert students believe that autonomous learning can really help them to master English. They find it comfortable to learn without teacher. These introvert students are willing to spend much time for learning independently and very much engaged in their autonomous learning. The differences lead them to organize their autonomous learning differently.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that introvert learners are better autonomous learners. Extrovert learners more rely on someone else in their learning. They tend to disbelieve that

their autonomous learning can lead them to be successful learners. This belief causes lower motivation and engagement in their autonomous learning activity. On the contrary, introvert learners are more confident in doing autonomous learners. They believe that their persistence in doing the autonomous practices lead them to have better language competence. This belief makes them highly motivated and engaged in their autonomous learning. Both personality types apply similar activities in their learning. Most activities are applied with the support of digital technology. Differences are found in the amount of time spent to practice using the technology and the method in practicing.

Introvert learners spend more time and tend to repeat the same material many times. They also tend to write what they learn in particular notes. They tend to apply specific strategies in their independent learning to be able to achieve their learning goals. Extrovert learners are not fond of doing repetition and taking a note. In short, it can be concluded that extrovert and introvert learners have different perception and apply different strategies in autonomous learning implementation. Yet, what they did showed that autonomous learning does not merely mean learning alone. Autonomous refers to self-trigger to learn, both individually and in groups. Unfortunately, this study is unable to show how these different ways of applying autonomous learning influence the students' achievement across personality type, gender, and competence. Further researchers can study more on whether male and female extrovert and introvert students apply their autonomous learning differently and whether extrovert and introvert students' different competence affect their autonomous learning and their achievement.

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