مجلة كلية اللغات

Faculty of Languages Journal

مجلة علمية محكمة نصف سنوية تصدر عن كلية اللغات جامعة طرابلس

A Scientific Journal Issued by the Faculty of Languages, University of Tripoli, Libya

JUNE 2023

رقم الإيداع 167/ 2015 دار الكتب الوطنية بنغـازي

ISSN : 2790-4016

Students' Perceptions of Self-Directed Learning

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate students' perceptions of self-directed learning. This is accomplished through the study aims which are: explore students' perceptions of self-directed learning SDL, and represent the importance of self-directed learning SDL. A random sample of students was selected from the Department of English at Tripoli University, Faculty of Education, Gasser ben Ghashair. Data for this study were collected by administering students' questionnaire consisting of 10 questions. The sample of the study consisted of 41students:39 females and 2 males. The results of this study indicated that students learn on their own. The study recommended that Self-directed learning should be given a attention, teachers should clarify self-directed learning techniques, and students should train themselves on how to use self-directed learning.

الملخص

الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو معرفة تصورات الطلاب للتعلم الموجه ذاتيًا. تم التحقق من ذلك من خلال أهداف الدراسة وهي: فهم تصورات الطلاب للتعلم الموجه ذاتيًا، ومعرفة أهمية التعلم الموجه ذاتيًا. تم اختيار عينة عشوائية من طلاب قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة طرابلس بكلية التربية قصر بن غشير. تم جمع بيانات هذه الدراسة من خلال استبيان مكون من **10** أسئلة. تكونت عينة الدراسة من **41** طالبا: **39** إناثا و **2** ذكور. أشارت نتائج هذه الدراسة إلى أن الطلاب لديهم القدرة للتعلم ذاتيا. أوصت الدراسة بضرورة الاهتمام بالتعلم الموجه ذاتيًا، ويجب على أعضاء هيئة التدريس توضيح تقنيات التعلم الذاتي ، ويجب على الطلاب تدريب أنفسهم على كيفية استخدام التعلم الذاتي.

KEYWORDS: self-directed, language, learning, and students.

Introduction

The rapid development of technology and fast pace of change in the 21st century often render professional expertise has frequently become obsolete due to the rapid advancement of technology and the rate of change. However, after students leave the classroom, some acquired skills, like a foreign language, need to be maintained constantly. Teachers must therefore encourage students to learn independently so they can adapt to these indispensable changes. Self-directed learning (SDL) has been successfully incorporated into several post-secondary fields to this point. (Defense,2013).self-directed learning develops students' abilities, interests, and hobbies. In addition to improving students' social, collaboration, management, and research abilities, self-directed learning keeps students engaged in their studies. The freedom and responsibility that students have to define and meet their own objectives and deadlines emphasizes the value of good time management and sound judgment.

The Aims of the Study

This study aims to:

Explore students' perceptions of self-directed learning SDL.

Represent the importance of self-directed learning SDL.

The significance of the Study

Self-directed learning is about building a passion for learning. It’s about using what the learners know, his experiences and the information that he has obtained in the past, present to produce something new. Being a self-directed learner, learners are encouraged by the experiment of creating an educational or learning strategy that works to him. Learners will not be afraid for asking questions or seeking for help if they need it. Students may feel relaxed asking teachers questions about course material so that they can learn more effectively and avoid receiving lost in a sea of information. It permits students to improve their learning skills. They will be able to do it even without going to university.

Research Questions

This research asks the following questions:
How students percept the self-directed learning?
What are the importance of self-directed learning?

Literature Review

The term "self-directed learning" is frequently used when discussing adult learning in higher education theory.

"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,1993:18).

According to Knowles' (1993) definition, a self-directed learner engages in the following five processes: (1) identifying learning needs; (2) setting goals; (3) choosing appropriate learning resources; (4) choosing and putting into practice appropriate learning strategies; and (5) assessing learning outcomes. Its "multifaceted description highlights its complexity, integrating cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal skills," according to Brandt (2020:5). SDL is "our most fundamental, natural response to newness, issues, or challenges in our surroundings," according to Guglielmino 2020, at the 34th International Conference on Self-Directed Learning, The International Society for Self-Directed Learning selected the following definition as its 2020 vision statement: "Self-directed learning is an intentional learning process that is developed and evaluated by the learner." (ISSDL, 2020:34). SDL is defined as "a dynamic combination of attitudes and skills, vital for dealing with the complexity individuals experience in all parts of their lives" Guglielmino and Long (2011:1). According to Brandt (2020:3), SDL "represents a learning process that is individual, purposeful, and developing".

Traditionally academics have compared self-directed learning to direct learning. A typical learning method is the direct approach. It refers to teaching that takes place between a teacher and a student, usually in a classroom. Self-directed learning is a type of instruction where the student assumes the role of their own education. They can choose, administer, and evaluate their own learning activities, for example. Instructors support the student by offering guidance, resources, and recommendations, and peers collaboration. Any improvement in knowledge, skill, accomplishment, or personal development that an individual chooses and brings about on their own using any means in any situation at any time is referred to as SDL. For instance, a student chooses to construct and fire rockets that will travel a mile into the atmosphere. He motivates others to follow him. They go on the Internet, contact the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, consult with a science teacher, find a machine shop, make trial models, and, after many efforts, succeed. Contrastingly, teacher-directed learning (TDL) refers to any improvement in a student's knowledge or skill that results from a teacher's initiatives. TDL includes the selection of the learning that is to be accomplished, presentations about it, assigned study and practice activities, and a test to measure mastery. For instance, a teacher might choose the subject of propulsion, teach all of the students about the physics involved, give them reading assignments and questions from a textbook, provide demonstrations using built rockets, and then assess the students' understanding of the concepts. Both methods of learning are important, TDL is essential because it offers an effective platform for the dissemination of new bodies of information and expertise SDL. Gibbons (2002).

The Essential Elements of SDL

Gibbons (2002) suggests the following elements of SDL:

1- **Student control over as much of the learning experience as possible**

The main change between TDL and SDL is the transfer of control from the teacher to the student. For the student, this implies a change from external to internal control, reflecting the significant transformation taking place in adolescent lives as they start to establish themselves as independent adults distinct from their childhood dependency. These are

the years when they start to form their own beliefs and ideas, choose their own activities, make their own decisions, assume greater responsibility for themselves, and start working. When students are given the responsibility for creating their own learning, they are forced to use their own resources, which fosters their developing individuality and enables them to practice more adult roles. As learners develop greater independence, not only effectively learn, but also develop themselves more.

2- Skill development

If students don't learn to concentrate and use their skills and energies intensely, inner control is ineffective. Due to this, SDL places a strong emphasis on the development of abilities and procedures that result in productive activity. Students gain the ability to complete course objectives, think critically, and organize and carry out their own activities. Students learn to achieve course outcomes, think independently, and plan and execute their own activities. These processes, and the skills involved in them, come together in student proposals forstudy and action. Students prepare and then negotiate them with their teachers, often in the form of written agreements that become records of the contracts that they negotiate. The intent is to provide a framework that enables students to identify their interests and equips them to realize them successfully.

Teaching students to challenge themselves to achieve best performance:

Self-direction is inactive in the absence of challenge. Teachers initially challenge their students before encouraging them to challenge themselves. A challenge demands pushing oneself to perform at a higher level in a situation they are comfortable with or taking a risk in a new area of interest. Setting a stricter standard for achievement than one is capable of meeting is what it indicates. To challenge oneself is to risk beyond one's comfort zone.

Stages of Self-directed Learning

Table 1: model of self-directed learning

Stage	Student	Teacher	Examples
Stage 1	Dependent	Authority Coach	Coaching with immediate feedback. Drill. Informational lecture. Overcoming deficiencies and resistance.
Stage 2	Interested	Motivator, guide	Inspiring lecture plus guided discussion. Goal-setting and learning strategies.
Stage 3	Involved	Facilitator	Discussion facilitated by teacher who participates as equal. Seminar. Group projects.
Stage 4	Self-directed	Consultant, delegator	Internship, dissertation, individual work or self-directed study-group.

Stage 1: Learners of Low Self-Direction

Dependent learners require a director who can provide them clear instructions on what to do, how to do it, and when to do it. The foundation of their learning is the teacher. They either passively slide through the educational system, responding mostly to teachers who "make" them learn, or they see teachers as subject matter experts who know what the student needs to do. Some students are dependent in every subject they are "taught," while others are only dependent in a select few. Some dependent learners succeed in a particular subject area; they might be methodical, thorough, and disciplined, mastering a given subject or passing on a planned tradition. (Grow, 1991).

Stage 2: Motivating Learners

Teaching is what's referred to as "excellent teaching" in many schools and universities. Students get enveloped in the pleasure of learning appreciations to the Stage 2 teacher's energy and motivation. Such a teacher will convince, justify, and sell adopting a directive but incredibly supportive style that enhances student enthusiasm and willingness. Students at this stage go along if they realize the concept and the instructor offers guidance and assistance. Alternatively, they might comply because they like the teacher. In contrast to pupils, learners at this stage respond well to personal engagement from the teacher. (ibid).

Stage 3: Learners of Intermediate Self-Direction

Learners at this stage consider themselves as active participants in their own learning and have acquired skills and information. With a good guide, they are prepared to look deeper into a topic. However, they may also need to improve their sense of direction, their sense of confidence, and their capacity to collaborate with (and learn from) others. Learning more about how they learn, such as using learning methods consciously, will be beneficial for stage 3 students. (Grow, 1991)

Stage 4: Learners of High Self-Direction

Self-directed students establish their own aims and standards, with or without assistance from professionals. To achieve these objectives, they employ use of experts, organizations, and other resources. Being independent does not actually correlate with becoming a loner; many independent learners are very social and participate in clubs or other unofficial learning communities. At this point, learners are able and willing to take charge of their education, direction, and output. Students practice skills in goal-setting, self-evaluation, peer assessment, time management, project management, information collection, and the use of educational resources. (Grow, 1991).

Methodology

This chapter presents the method and procedure that apply in this study. It organizes under the following sub-headings: design of the study, the participants, time and place of the Study, and instrument of the study.

Design of the Study:

The purpose of this study is to explore students' perceptions of self-directed learning and represent the importance of self-directed learning. The nature of this research is quantitative.

The Participants:

The participants in this study are the students at Tripoli University, Faculty of Education, Gasser ben Ghashair, Department of English. The participants are selected to explain their perception of SDL. The participants are 41students, 39 females and 2 males, females represents

95.1% and males represents4.9% of the sample. Their ages ranges between 18to 25years old. 97.6% of the sample are Libyan, and 2.4% are non-Libyan.

Time and Place of the Study:

The study is conducted in March,2023 at Faculty of Education, Qasser ben Ghashair.

Instrument of the Study:

To investigate students' perceptions of SDL, the researcher uses a students' questionnaire, it starts with background information about the participants including: name, gender, age. Nationality. It contains 10 items. The questionnaire takes 15 minutes to apply.

Data Analysis, Results, and Discussion:

Results of the Questionnaire:

This chapter presents the data analysis and discussion.

Table 2: data analysis of age, gender, nationality, and the first two questions:

		Age	Gender	National ity	I regularly learn things on my own outside of class.	I am very good at finding out answers on my own for things that the teacher does not explain in class
N	Valid	41	41	41	41	41
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		1.61			3.9024	3.1220
Std. Error of Mean		.130			.09756	.18869
Median		1.00			4.0000	4.0000
Mode		1			4.00	4.00
Std. Deviation		.833			.62470	1.20820
Variance		.694			.390	1.460

	Skewness	.861			-1.875-	-.245-
	Std. Error of Skewness	.369			.369	.369
	Kurtosis	-.992-			5.214	-1.415-
	Std. Error of Kurtosis	.724			.724	.724
	Range	2			3.00	4.00
	Minimum	1			2.00	1.00
	Maximum	3			5.00	5.00
	Sum	66			160.00	128.00
Percentiles	25	1.00			4.0000	2.0000
	50	1.00			4.0000	4.0000
	75	2.00			4.0000	4.0000

Table 3: data analysis of questions (3,5,6,7)

		If there is something I don't understand in a class, I always find a way to learn it on my own	I am good at finding the right resources to help me do well in the class	I view self-directed learning based on my initiative as very important for success in class and in my future career	I set my goals for what i will learn.
N	Valid	41	41	41	41
	Missing	0	0	0	0
	Mean	3.4390	3.6341	3.2439	3.6098

Std. Error of Mean		.17478	.14295	.17030	.14347
Median		4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000
Mode		4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Std. Deviation		1.11912	.91532	1.09042	.91864
Variance		1.252	.838	1.189	.844
Skewness		-.965-	-1.035-	-.515-	-1.358-
Std. Error of Skewness		.369	.369	.369	.369
Kurtosis		-.259-	-.129-	-1.068-	.909
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.724	.724	.724	.724
Range		4.00	3.00	4.00	4.00
Minimum		1.00	2.00	1.00	1.00
Maximum		5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
Sum		141.00	149.00	133.00	148.00
Percentiles	25	2.0000	4.0000	2.0000	4.0000
	50	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000
	75	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000

Table 4: data analysis of the last questions

		I like to be in charge of what I learn and when I learn it.	If there is something I need to learn, I find a way to do so right away.	I am better at learning things on my own than most students	I am very motivated to learn on my own without having to rely on other people.
N	Valid	41	41	41	41
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.4146	3.7073	3.1707	2.9756
Std. Error of Mean		.15994	.12219	.16343	.17281
Median		4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	3.0000

	Mode	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
	Std. Deviation	1.02410	.78243	1.04648	1.10652
	Variance	1.049	.612	1.095	1.224
	Skewness	-1.226-	-2.056-	-.359-	-.066-
	Std. Error of Skewness	.369	.369	.369	.369
	Kurtosis	.343	3.833	-1.495-	-1.602-
	Std. Error of Kurtosis	.724	.724	.724	.724
	Range	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
	Minimum	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
	Maximum	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
	Sum	140.00	152.00	130.00	122.00
Percentiles	25	3.0000	4.0000	2.0000	2.0000
	50	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	3.0000
	75	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000

Table 5: indicates the age of the sample

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-20	25	61.0	61.0	61.0
	20-22	7	17.1	17.1	78.0
	more than 20	9	22.0	22.0	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

Table 5 indicates that 61% of the sample between 18-20, 17.1% between 20-22, and 22% more than 20.

Table 6: shows the gender of the sample

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	female	39	95.1	95.1	95.1
	Male	2	4.9	4.9	100.0

	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

95% of the sample are females, and 4.9% are males.

Table 7: shows the nationality of the sample

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Libyan	40	97.6	97.6	97.6
	non Libyan	1	2.4	2.4	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

97.6% of the sample are Libyan, and 2.4% are non-Libyan.

Table 8: I am very good at finding out answers on my own for things that the teacher does not explain in class

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	3	7.3	7.3	7.3
	Disagree	15	36.6	36.6	43.9
	Agree	20	48.8	48.8	92.7
	strongly agree	3	7.3	7.3	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

Table 8 indicates that 7.3% of the sample strongly disagree, 36.6% disagree, 48.8% agree, and 7.3% strongly agree.

Table 9: If there is something I don't understand in a class, I always find a way to learn it on my own

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	3	7.3	7.3	7.3
	Disagree	8	19.5	19.5	26.8

	neither disagree or agree	1	2.4	2.4	29.3
	Agree	26	63.4	63.4	92.7
	strongly agree	3	7.3	7.3	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

Table 9 indicates that 7.3% of the sample strongly disagree, 19.5% disagree, 2.4% neither disagree or agree, 63.4% agree, and 7.3% strongly agree.

Table 10:I view self-directed learning based on my initiative as very important for success in class and in my future career

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	2	4.9	4.9	4.9
	Disagree	12	29.3	29.3	34.1
	neither disagree or agree	3	7.3	7.3	41.5
	Agree	22	53.7	53.7	95.1
	strongly agree	2	4.9	4.9	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

Table 10 indicates that 4.9% of the sample strongly disagree, 29.3% disagree, 7.3% neither disagree or agree,53.7 % agree, and 4.9% strongly agree.

Table 11:I like to be in charge of what I learn and when I learn it.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	3	7.3	7.3	7.3
	Disagree	6	14.6	14.6	22.0
	neither disagree or agree	4	9.8	9.8	31.7

	Agree	27	65.9	65.9	97.6
	strongly agree	1	2.4	2.4	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

Table11 indicates that 7.3% of the sample strongly disagree, 14.6% disagree, 9.8% neither disagree or agree, 65.9 % agree, and 2.4% strongly agree.

Table 12 If there is something I need to learn, I find a way to do so right away.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	1	2.4	2.4	2.4
	Disagree	4	9.8	9.8	12.2
	neither disagree or agree	2	4.9	4.9	17.1
	Agree	33	80.5	80.5	97.6
	strongly agree	1	2.4	2.4	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

Table12 indicates that 2.4% of the sample strongly disagree, 9.8% disagree, 4.9% neither disagree or agree, 80.5% agree, and 2.4% strongly agree.

Table 13 I am better at learning things on my own than most students

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	1	2.4	2.4	2.4
	Disagree	15	36.6	36.6	39.0
	neither disagree or agree	2	4.9	4.9	43.9
	Agree	22	53.7	53.7	97.6
	strongly agree	1	2.4	2.4	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

Table13 indicates that 2.4% of the sample strongly disagree, 36.6% disagree, 4.9% neither disagree or agree, 53.7% agree, and 2.4% strongly agree.

Table 14: I am very motivated to learn on my own without having to rely on other people.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	2	4.9	4.9	4.9
	Disagree	18	43.9	43.9	48.8
	neither disagree or agree	1	2.4	2.4	51.2
	Agree	19	46.3	46.3	97.6
	strongly agree	1	2.4	2.4	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

Table 14 indicates that 4.9% of the sample strongly disagree, 43.9% disagree, 2.4% neither disagree or agree, 46.3% agree, and 2.4% strongly agree.

Results and Discussion

This part represents a discussion of the results of the data analysis and the interpretation of the results. The researcher used SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science). The study indicated that the students could learn on their own. This is the answer to the first research question: How do students perceive self-directed learning? It is also important because self-directed learning is an important technique that can help students learn more. The study indicated that 48.8% of the sample are good at finding answers to things that teachers don't explain, and 63.4% learn on their own if they face something difficult. This is a high percentage, which indicates that students can learn themselves. Gibbons (2002) adds that when students are given the responsibility for creating their own learning, they are forced to use their own resources, which fosters their developing individuality and enables them to practice more adult roles. As learners develop greater independence, not only effectively learn, but also develop themselves more. Also, 80.5% agreed that if there is something they want to learn, they will find the

right way to learn it. 53% of the sample find themselves good at self-directed learning. On the other hand, 46.3% of the sample is motivated to learn on their own without having to rely on other people. Many principles of motivation are built into the design of SDL, such as the pursuit of one's own high-interest goals. When students adopt these principles, they become the major elements of self-motivation. Gibbons (2002). On the other hand, learners are able and willing to take charge of their education, direction, and output. Students practice skills in goal-setting, self-evaluation, peer assessment, time management, project management, information collection, and the use of educational resources. (Grow, 1991).It can be understood that students can learn on their own.

Recommendations

Self-directed learning should be given attention.
Teachers should clarify self-directed learning techniques.
Students should train themselves on how to use self-directed learning.

Conclusion

This study sheds light on students' perceptions of self-directed learning. SDL at the English Language Department, Faculty of Education Qasser ben Ghshair, the study also focuses on the importance of self-directed learning and its benefits for the learners. The results of this study indicated that students can learn on their own without relying on others, and they can search for the material that they need using many sources, like the internet. The study also indicates that students have the ability to learn and motivate themselves. Finally, self-directed learning is important for the learners, and it can help them build an independent personality.

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