

Self-Directed Learning Strategy of my English-Speaking Journey: A Narrative Inquiry

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to shed light on the transformative experience of learning English independently, along with the valuable insights and personal growth that came with it. The researcher recounts his personal journey of learning English. His path to speaking English ability was ignited by a newfound curiosity inspired by Hollywood movies and gradually developed into a structured learning process. This process included self-initiated actions like volunteering to speak publicly in English and participating in weekly speaking activities. The research follows a qualitative design using a narrative inquiry approach to share the researcher's English learning experience. The data of this study was his personal experiences that he wrote into narratives in diary. This research offers insights into the transformative process of learning English independently and underscores the significance of self-directed learning, motivation, persistence, and reflection in language acquisition. Through initiative, goal setting, creativity, motivation, persistence, and reflection, the researcher overcame challenges and achieved substantial improvement in English language learning. This journey not only enhanced his language abilities but also built resilience and a deeper understanding of effective learning methods applicable beyond language learning. These findings contribute to the understanding of effective learning strategies that can be utilized in various contexts.

Keywords: *Self-directed Learning; English Speaking; Narrative Inquiry*

INTRODUCTION

The widespread use of language in communication between individuals who do not share a common first or second language suggests that language learning is crucial in human life for effective communication and understanding (Harmer, 2007). English has become a widely used international language for communication around the world.

Further, learning strategies serve as tools for active learning and self-directed engagement crucial for the development of communicative competence (Oxford, 1990). Language learning strategies refer to specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques employed by students, often with a conscious effort, to enhance their overall progress in the internalization, storage, retrieval, and application of a new language. According to (Rigney, 1978), these strategies play a pivotal role in shaping the learning experience, influencing the effectiveness and efficiency with which learners acquire and use a foreign language. Language learning strategies are not merely passive techniques but rather dynamic tools that facilitate active and self-directed engagement in the process of developing communicative abilities. (Wenden and Rubin, 1987) state that these strategies encompass a range of deliberate actions, behaviors, and techniques employed by language learners to enhance their proficiency in using a new language in real-world communicative contexts.

Self-directed learning involves recognizing that students can actively shape their educational experiences (Shannon, 2008). A key foundation for this autonomy is the development of metacognition, which is the ability to reflect on one's own thought processes, understand how

to approach learning tasks, and organize cognitive strategies. Through self-directed learning, students learn to set specific learning goals, monitor their progress, and adjust their strategies based on ongoing self-assessment as mentioned by (Victori and Lockhart, 1995).

My experiences in learning English through self-directed learning strategies at Maktab Nubdzatul Bayan, Pondok Pesantren Mambaul Ulum Bata-bata, and outside of lectures in my third year at Nurul Jadid University has been significant to my English speaking. In this process, I have implemented five key components: self-initiated action, goal setting and planning, resource utilization, motivation and persistence, self-assessment, and reflection. There was no special English language program at Maktab Nubdzatul Bayan, Mambaul Ulum Bata-bata Islamic Boarding School. While studying at Nurul Jadid University, I also lived in an area that focused on the study of classical Islamic texts. As a student majoring in English Education, I realized that my environment did not support learning English outside of lectures. By the fifth semester, I recognized that my approach at Maktab Nubdzatul Bayan, Mambaul Ulum Bata-bata Islamic Boarding School, was an application of self-directed learning for studying English, which I found intriguing for research. Consequently, I proposed a study titled "Self-Directed Learning Strategy of English Speaking in Narrative Inquiry".

To compile the experienced phenomenon as research, the researcher needed to review previous studies to identify gaps and areas for updates based on experience. (Putri, 2014) wrote a thesis examining her experience with language learning strategies in developing speaking skills, using qualitative narrative inquiry research. She documented her experiences from junior high school through undergraduate studies, noting that the modern Islamic boarding school she attended supported her English learning by providing various language activities that allowed her to practice speaking.

However, what about someone who desires to learn English but lives in an Islamic boarding school that doesn't offer a special English language program, like my previous boarding school? While my research is contrastive to Putri's thesis (2014), it's important to highlight the differences between our experiences. Putri's strategies were heavily influenced by the programs provided by her Islamic boarding school. In contrast, my focus is on the self-directed learning experiences I applied during my English-speaking learning process. This research clearly aims to explore events or moments that influenced my interest in learning English, especially in speaking ability, and to explore the practical application of self-directed strategy throughout my learning journey.

Aligned with the background, the statement of the problem can be articulated as follows: To what extent experiences of self-directed learning have been significant in my English speaking? What insights can be gained from my self-directed learning experiences of English speaking through writing about them?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Definition of Self-Directed Learning

Self-Directed Learning is the process through which individuals develop and refine their skills in independent learning, (Boyatzis, 2002). It goes beyond the traditional classroom setting and formal instruction, emphasizing the learner's autonomy, initiative, and responsibility for their own educational journey. In SDL, individuals take an active role in identifying their learning needs, setting goals, and determining the most effective strategies to achieve those goals, (Hmelo and Lin, 2000). It is a learner-centric approach where the individual becomes the primary driver of their

learning experience. Self-directed learning is grounded in the recognition that students possess the capacity to actively shape and guide their educational experiences. It moves away from traditional, teacher-centered models, placing the learner at the center of the educational process (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990).

According to (Knowles, 1975), self-directed learning is defined as a process in which a person has the initiative, with or without the help of others, to analyze his own learning needs, formulate his own learning goals, identify learning resources, select and implement appropriate learning strategies and evaluate his own learning outcomes. (Rachmawati, 2010) defines self-directed learning as a learning method that is flexible but still oriented towards planning, monitoring and evaluating depending on the student's ability to manage learning in accordance with their autonomy. These independent activities require students to be able to organize existing learning resources according to their needs and learning context.

Self-directed learning is the ability of students to take the initiative to be responsible for their lessons with or without the help of other people which includes aspects: awareness, learning strategies, learning activities, evaluation, and interpersonal skills (Loyens, Magda and Rikers, 2008). Self-directed learning is a learning activity that is based on one's own will, without the help of others and can take responsibility for one's actions. Students are said to be able to learn independently if they can carry out learning tasks without dependence on other people. The main characteristics of students who are able to study independently can be seen from how they start their studies, manage their time in studying independently, study using methods and techniques according to their own abilities and are able to recognize their own shortcomings (Marshall and Rowland, 2013).

Therefore, the definition of independent learning can be assumed to be a learning process based on initiative showing a willingness to carry out SDL, being able to determine one's own destiny and choosing for oneself the best way for one to learn and being able to expand the skills one has. The characteristics of student independence can be identified as follows: (1) They are able to think critically, creatively and innovatively. (2) Not easily influenced by other people's opinions. (3) Don't run away or avoid problems. (4) Solve problems by thinking deeply. (5) If you encounter a problem, solve it yourself without the help of others. (6) Don't feel inferior if you have to differ with other people's opinions. (7) Try to work with full diligence and discipline. (8) Be responsible for one's own actions. Therefore, as a condition for students to be able to learn independently, they must be educated through good learning methods so that from the start of giving learning assignments it must have arisen in the soul and mind of students to organize their own learning activities based on good learning methodology and the stages in the learning process flows by itself, (Kharismawan, Haryani and Nuswowati, 2018).

Steps to implement Self-Directed Learning

Self-directed learning can be formed through four stages as mentioned by (Knowles, 1975). First, students think independently, meaning students do not rely on their thinking on the teacher, but on their own thinking. Second, students learn to understand themselves. Third, students learn self-planning, how students will learn to achieve the program and learning goals that have been set. Fourth, the formation of self-directed learning, students decide for themselves what will learn and how they will learn it.

Self-Directed Learning in practice involves a four-step process, as highlighted by a review of the literature. There are several essential skills that learners can use to successfully take full control of their learning. This section of the paper focuses on the methodological aspects of self-

directed learning, providing practical ideas for teachers who want to help their students develop these skills. To give structure to the activities that aid learners in acquiring these skills, four phases of a self-directed learning cycle have been identified: planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating.

1. Planning

Included in this stage are: analyzing students' needs, institutions and curriculum issues, analyzing the skills or abilities possessed by students, designing continuous learning objectives, choosing the right resources for learning, and making plans regarding learning activities. daily.

2. Implementing

Educators promote the abilities of students, apply learning according to the results of adopted plans and settings, adjustments that have been made, and provide opportunities for students to choose methods that suit their wishes.

3. Monitoring

At this stage, educators carry out mind-tasting monitoring or supervising the work on assigned tasks, study balance monitoring or supervising students while working on other activities related to the main learning task, as well as awareness monitoring or supervising students' awareness and sensitivity during learning.

4. Evaluating

Educators compare student results, adjust and assess students with previously designed objectives, and ask students for statements, by asking questions regarding the task completion process.

METHOD

Qualitative research methods were employed for this study, specifically utilizing a narrative inquiry approach. The chosen research approach is qualitative, as it aligns with the descriptive nature of the study. Qualitative research, as defined by Cresswell in his book "Educational Research," involves relying heavily on information provided by the object/participant. It encompasses a broad scope, utilizes general questions, predominantly collects data in the form of words/texts from participants, and involves the explanation and analysis of the obtained research data. Indeed, (Creswell and Poth, 2016) stated that qualitative research is particularly suitable when researchers aim to explore and understand the intricacies of someone's lived experience.

In the realm of qualitative research, a multitude of approaches are available, among which narrative inquiry stands as a prominent component. Narrative inquiry serves as a research methodology employed to gain insights from the experiences of individuals and social groups, allowing for a reenactment of these experiences through the medium of language. As Polkinghorne asserts, narrative inquiry is not a novel concept within the realm of qualitative research, but rather a well-established subset of research designs that employs storytelling as a means to depict human actions (Polkinghorne, 2005). Narrative research represents an essential dimension within the realm of scholarly inquiry, primarily centered on the acquisition and subsequent contemplation of individuals' real-life experiences (Josselson, 2007).

The narrative research method, initially introduced (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990) and further developed by (Clandinin and Huber, 2010), centers around examining the life stories of individuals. This approach is based on the fundamental principle that humans are natural storytellers, shaping their lives through personal or social narratives. Consequently, studying

narratives, as outlined by (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990), involves exploring how individuals navigate their existence in the world. A well-executed narrative study initiates by exploring my personal experiences. This is because a narrative study is an ongoing reflective and reflexive methodology. Consequently, "narrative inquirers" are encouraged to consistently investigate their own experiences before, during, and after each inquiry, as emphasized by (Clandinin and Caine, 2013). Within educational research, this principle is refined to emphasize that education and educational research involve the construction and reconstruction of stories by individuals and social groups. Learners, teachers, and researchers all serve as storytellers and characters, either narrating their own stories or recounting the stories of others, addition by (Daud, 2021).

Data Source

In this study, my own experiences serve as the fragments of the story that are retold and analyzed. The data collection process involved reflecting on researcher' experiences of self-directed learning English speaking. By drawing from these personal experiences, the study gains a distinctive perspective that enriches the research findings.

Data Collection

During the data collection process, I engage in self-observation by reflections of my learning experiences. Subsequently, I select experiences that are relevant to the problems addressed in this study. Following this selection, I set the stage for the data by describing the context. Therefore, I employ a mind map to organize thoughts and translates it into a narrative form.

Data Analysis

As for analyzing the data above, I utilize thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a way of studying information by looking closely at stories and accounts. It could be spoken, written, or visual narratives. The main idea is to understand and explain a research problem by carefully examining and interpreting these stories. In narrative analysis, making sense means finding patterns, themes, and deeper meanings in the stories within the data, (Mirhosseini, 2020). The first step was to make sense of the experiences I collected as data. This involved reading through the text, taking initial notes, and generally analyzing the data to understand it. Thereafter, I coded the data by highlighting sections of text and creating short labels, or "codes," to describe its content. Afterward, I reviewed the codes I had created, identified patterns among them, and began to identify emerging themes. I then ensured that the themes were accurate and useful representations of the data. To do this, I revisited the data set and compared it with the themes, determining which ones were relevant and which were not. Finally, I created a final list of themes and named and defined each one.

I systematically explore the narratives, identify repeating themes, analyze relationships between different parts, and understand the context to better comprehend the subject of this study. Retelling involves translating these patterns and themes into a clear narrative that fits the language and structure of academic research. This retelling isn't just summarizing, it's a purposeful reconstruction that highlights the relevance of the stories to the main research problem or question. The emphasis on the research problem shows that narrative analysis is not just about telling stories. I use this method with a specific goal in mind to provide insights, answer research questions, or shed light on particular aspects of the subject being studied, (Mirhosseini, 2020).

FINDINGS

The findings of this study are organized according to thematic analysis through my diary personal documentation. The themes of the findings will be articulated as follows:

Discovery of English language through movies during Islamic boarding school holidays

In this narrative, I describe my experience of discovering the English language through watching Hollywood movies during their holidays at an Islamic boarding school. I mention being captivated by the action on screen as well as the words spoken by the characters. This exposure to English sparked my curiosity and interest in learning the language, despite the lack of a foreign language program at the boarding school.

“After graduating from elementary school, I boarded at an Islamic boarding school where the focus of learning was classical Islamic books (salaf) namely Maktuba Mambaul Ulum Bata-bata. As a student on holiday from the Islamic boarding school, I found myself with evenings stretching into the late hours, unsure of how to fill the time. Accustomed to the disciplined routines of the school, where activities often ended late at night, I sought entertainment and stumbled upon the Trans TV Cinema. There, amidst the flickering lights and cozy seats, I discovered a treasure trove of Hollywood classics: James Bond's daring escapades, Spiderman swinging through New York City, and the relentless pursuit of the Terminator. Each movie transported me to a world beyond my own, where heroes battled villains in a language unfamiliar yet strangely captivating: English. As the credits, I found myself lingering, captivated not only by the action on screen but also by the words spoken by these iconic characters. The desire to understand their conversations, their jokes, and their emotions sparked a newfound curiosity in me an interest that extended beyond entertainment to a thirst for knowledge. Because there was no foreign language program at the Islamic boarding school, until I graduated from junior high school, I only knew English through the films I watched during the boarding school holidays”.

Discovery of English through Hollywood movies during my vacation at the boarding school was an important aspect of my learning. It opened the way for me to be interested in studying English, especially speaking English. The lack of a formal foreign language program in the boarding school meant that this exposure was my main source of English. The intrigue and curiosity triggered by the films made me pay attention to the language, despite the lack of a structured guide. This self-paced learning approach allows me to engage with the language in a meaningful way, laying down a basic interest and familiarity with the English language.

From this experience, some insights that can be taken are the importance of intrinsic motivation in language learning. My curiosity and desire to understand the language, driven by a personal interest in film, facilitated my involvement with the English language. Then, it shows that informal learning environments, such as watching movies, can be a powerful tool for language acquisition. Watching movies introduced me not only to the English but also to the cultural nuances, expressions, and context, which are integral to language learning. This exposure can improve understanding and provide a deeper connection with language. Exposure to the use of authentic language in an entertaining context can spark interest and provide examples of practical language. This experience also underscores the value of independent exploration in learning. Although there was no formal instruction, my initiative to engage with the English media allowed me to develop a basic understanding and appreciation of the language.

A. Taking initiative to learn English through weekly speech activities at the Islamic boarding school

I share my experience of taking the initiative to learn English from a friend named Fikri in this narrative. I mention volunteering to be a speaker during the weekly foreign language speeches at the boarding school, despite being a beginner. I describe studying the text prepared by Fikri and facing difficulties in creating my own texts, but overcoming them through the use of a dictionary. I actively participate in the weekly speech activities for three years, indicating a commitment to learning the language.

“During high school, I continued my studies at that Islamic boarding school. One day, Kiai ordered the management to hold foreign language speeches every Friday. My friend, Fikri Ali Yasin, who has been able to speak English since elementary school, was the speaker on the first Friday. The following Friday someone else should be the speaker. Because no one at the boarding school had ever studied English, Fikri was confused about who would be the next speaker. I, who was interested in English, immediately volunteered with only determination and a willingness to learn. After several days of studying the text that had been prepared by Fikri, on the following Friday I actually became a very amateur English speaker in front of dozens of people.

After that day, I made up my mind to continue learning English from Fikri. The four days of lessons are about basic tenses. The first lesson is present simple tense and how to use it, then past simple tense, future simple tense, and present continuous tense in the following days. After every lesson, Fikri always tells me to write a speech text according to the lesson I learned from him. Because I'm still a beginner, I have a lot of difficulties when I create texts, both in terms of arrangement, pronunciation, and lack of vocabulary. I can minimize all these difficulties by studying them through a dictionary. Once the text was finished, I read it and asked Fikri to proofread it, then revised it according to directions. The texts that I create become the material that I present during weekly speech activities. I participated in this activity which ran every week for three years”.

My initiative to participate in weekly foreign language speeches at pesantren was an important aspect of my independent learning journey. Despite being a beginner, I volunteered to speak in front of others, showing a strong commitment to learning English. The process of preparing and delivering speeches, coupled with learning English under the guidance of my friend Fikri, gave me consistent practice and learning opportunities. This experience not only improved my speaking skills but also built my confidence in using the language.

The insights that can be drawn from this experience are my proactive approach in volunteering for speeches and seeking guidance from knowledgeable friends, highlighting the importance of taking initiative in the learning process. The willingness to step out of my comfort zone is crucial in improving my English language skills. Learning from peers, in this case, Fikri, underlined the value of peer support in language acquisition. Peers can provide explanations, corrections, and encouragement in a more relatable and less formal atmosphere. Then, Engagement in weekly speech activities provides a structured and regular opportunity to practice English. My perseverance for three years shows continuous effort, which is essential for language development. The act of preparing and delivering a speech allows me to apply my learning in real-world practical scenarios. This experiential learning helps strengthen my understanding and use of the language. The challenges I face, such as difficulties in texting, pronunciation, and limited vocabulary, and my methods of coping with them (using dictionaries, receiving feedback, and revising them), reflect my problem-solving approach to learning. This adaptability and intellect are key components of independent learning.

Special program for foreign language learners in high school

In this section, I discuss a special program for foreign language learners in my boarding school since I was in third class in high school. I mention studying grammar, memorizing vocabulary, and listening to native speakers' conversations. I also describe the consequences of violating the program's rules and my involvement in a graduation performance of a classic Islamic book with English translation.

“When I was in third grade at high school, Kiai created a special program for foreign language learners to focus on studying a foreign language for three months. I am very happy because I have the opportunity to deepen my knowledge of English. It was during that time that I studied grammar thoroughly, memorized vocabulary, idioms, listened to native speakers' conversations, or listened to songs. Of the 16 tenses, each tense is studied for two days.

Every day I have to submit a minimum of 10 daily vocabulary words to the teacher and I have to speak English. If I violate it, the sanction is making a speech or reading a text aloud in front of the dormitory during break activities. Several months later, I and two of my friends who were also included in the special program were selected to be the graduation performers of the classic Islamic book Fathul Qorib from page 1 to page 10 with meaning and English translation. For the sake of maximum performance in front of thousands of people, we always practiced reading the book and translating it into English every night for one month. This made me more enthusiastic about studying English in collaboration with studying classical Islamic books, which made me dream of spreading Islamic boarding school teachings on the European or American continents.”

The special program for foreign language learners at my boarding school provides a structured and intensive learning environment that complements my self-study efforts. Although the program itself is organized and supervised, my active participation and dedication are essential to make the most of this opportunity. This program allowed me to deepen my understanding of English grammar, expand my vocabulary, and gain exposure with native speakers. My involvement in the graduation show further demonstrates my commitment to applying my language skills in real-world contexts, strengthening my English language proficiency.

Insights from my experience with specialized programs including structured language programs can significantly enhance self-paced learning by providing clear curriculum, deadlines, and expectations. This formal learning environment helped me focus intensively on various aspects of the English language, such as grammar and vocabulary. The rules and consequences of the program for not following them, such as giving speeches in front of others, serve as a strong incentive to maintain discipline and consistent effort. This kind of accountability can be a strong motivator in language learning. Then, the integration of studying classical Islamic texts with English translations illustrates the potential of language learning to improve and intersect with other fields of study. This multidisciplinary approach can deepen understanding and foster a more holistic educational experience. Preparing for and participating in public performances strengthens my language skills and confidence. Public speaking in a foreign language requires a deep understanding of the language and the ability to convey meaning clearly, which can significantly improve proficiency. Listening to native speakers and songs provides authentic language input, which is essential for developing accurate pronunciation, intonation, and understanding of everyday expressions.

Lack of English practice in college dormitory

I share my experience living in a college dormitory that focuses on studying classical Islamic books. I mention the lack of opportunities to practice English and how it affected my English skills.

“When I started college, I lived in a dormitory that focused on studying classical Islamic books or what is known as the salaf. This hostel is very disciplined and strict in terms of learning, with a schedule full of studying activities, memorizing, and studying classical texts. This environment is very conducive to increasing religious understanding, but provides almost no opportunities to practice English.

For the first two years in the dormitory, I almost never spoke English. Most daily conversations take place in the local language or classical Arabic, according to the material we study. Even though I had studied English before, the lack of practice made my English skills dull”.

The experience of living in a college dormitory with a focus on classical Islamic studies illustrates a period in which self-study opportunities for the English language were severely limited. The rigorous, discipline-focused environment prioritizes religious studies and classical Arabic, leaving little room for English language practice. As a result, despite previous attempts to learn

English, the lack of practice in everyday conversation led to a decline in my language skills. This experience highlights the importance of consistent practice and immersion in maintaining and improving language proficiency.

Insights from this period include The decline in my English language skills due to lack of practice underscores the importance of consistent language use and exposure. Without regular opportunities to speak and engage with the English language, even the skills previously acquired may be diminished. The environment plays an important role in language learning. In my case, the board's focus on classical texts and the use of Arabic and local languages limited opportunities to use English, affecting my language retention and fluency. Although the environment is beneficial for religious and classical studies, it is less balanced in offering opportunities for foreign language practice. This highlights the need for a well-rounded learning environment that supports various areas of development, including language skills. This situation emphasizes the importance of self-motivation and initiative in seeking opportunities to practice the language, especially when the surrounding environment is not supportive of it. This may involve finding alternative ways to engage with the English language, such as through the media, online communities, or personal study. The immersive nature of the dormitory's focus on classical Islamic texts suggests how immersion in a particular field or language can significantly shape one's daily experiences and skills. In this case, immersion in the study of religion and classical Arabic led to a reduction in the use of the English.

Rediscovering English through the Duolingo app

In this narrative, I share my decision to use the Duolingo app to rediscover my English skills. I mention being inspired by a content creator and setting a simple goal of using the app for at least five minutes every day.

“However, everything changed in the third year. I started watching YouTube videos from a content creator named Fiki Naki. He is known for his ability to interact with foreigners from various countries in various languages. Fiki often talks about how he taught himself many languages, especially through the Duolingo application. Seeing his success, I felt very inspired and motivated to hone my English skills again.

I decided to try the same approach. I downloaded the Duolingo app and set a simple goal for myself: use the app for at least five minutes every day. At first, five minutes seemed very short, but I wanted to build a consistent habit first. Every day, I spent time studying through the app, improving my vocabulary, grammar, and speaking skills.”

Rediscovering English through the Duolingo app is a significant update of self-learning in My language journey. Inspired by content creators, I took the initiative to improve my English language skills independently by setting manageable daily goals. This consistent practice, even if it is only a few minutes each day, allows me to gradually rebuild and improve my vocabulary, grammar, and speaking skills. This approach illustrates the value of self-motivation and the effectiveness of accessible language learning tools in maintaining and advancing language proficiency.

Some insights emerged from my experience using the Duolingo app was that setting a simple and achievable goal to use the app for at least five minutes each day highlights the importance of consistency in language learning. Regular and little exercise can lead to significant progress over time. The effectiveness of language learning apps like Duolingo shows how technology can be a valuable resource for independent learners. These tools provide structured lessons, hands-on feedback, and the flexibility to learn at your own pace. Inspired by content creators who have successfully learned multiple languages underscores the impact role models

have in motivating and guiding language learning efforts. Seeing the success of others can inspire the same goals and provide practical strategies. My decision to find and use language learning apps independently highlights the role of self-motivation in the learning process. This initiative is especially important, especially when formal education settings or nearby environments do not provide the desired opportunities. It is also very important to build consistent habits as a basis for further learning. By committing to small exercises every day, I create an ongoing routine that facilitates continuous improvement in my English language skills.

DISCUSSION

As mentioned above, according to Knowles (1975) self-directed learning is a process in which a person has the initiative, with or without the help of others, to analyze his own learning needs, formulate his own learning goals, identify learning resources, select and implement appropriate learning strategies and evaluate his own learning outcomes. (Knowles, 1975) In this section, the correlation of self-directed learning theory and my experiences will be discussed.

Self-Initiated Actions

To effectively engage students who initially show disinterest in a lesson due to their background, it is crucial to identify a suitable learning medium that captures their interest and motivates them to actively participate in the material. In this context, when I was an elementary school student who did not like English lessons, I eventually found that movies could serve as a medium to spark my interest in learning English.

Movies not only increase learning motivation but also have been proven to improve students' English skills. Al-Ahdal et al. (2021) found that students' communicative proficiency and engagement in learning increased when teachers incorporated movies into their teaching. The findings of (Alolaywi, 2023) research also show that watching movies can improve English fluency and speaking ability of EFL undergraduate English students in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The movies I watched have introduced me to basic English vocabulary, such as I, you, they, and some verbs such as stand, sit, like, and others. I got those vocabularies through the subtitles, as the results of Alolaywi's research show that the majority of participants prefer watching movies with subtitles.

Afterward, I became very interested in learning English but was unsure where to start. Then, my friend Fikri unexpectedly invited me to be a speaker at a newly established weekly activity. I immediately accepted his offer because it provided me with an opportunity to learn English, particularly speaking. This initiative proved to be pivotal in my educational journey. As Steven and (Shannon, 2008) described, self-directed learning must begin with student initiation to actively participate in learning, which is essentially student motivation. This initiative marked the beginning of my journey as a self-directed learner, aiming to learn and use English. This aligns with Brophy's (1986) statement, cited by (Shannon, 2008), that students' motivation to learn is defined as their tendency to pursue meaningful and useful academic activities and strive to achieve the academic benefits they seek.

Self-initiated actions are essential in self-paced learning. My discovery of the English through film and subsequent voluntary participation in English speech shows how intrinsic interest can drive learning. By choosing to get involved with the film and then volunteer for the speech, I took a proactive step to meet my own learning needs. This is in line with concept by (Knowles, 1975) that learners must have the initiative to pursue their educational interests, which often requires finding interesting and relevant learning media. The effectiveness of self-learning is

enhanced when learners identify their interests and actively seek opportunities to explore those interests. (Knowles, 1975) adds, this proactive approach not only fosters engagement but also helps develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

Goals setting and planning

As a self-directed learner, setting learning goals and planning the learning process are essential. Goal setting is crucial because it defines my learning objectives, and to achieve these objectives, I need to plan the necessary steps. The importance of goal setting and learning planning underscores the significance of education (Francom, 2010).

Since I became interested in English, I wanted to learn it to understand and use it effectively. To set these goals, I needed to be aware of my self-efficacy because, in goal-setting theory, self-efficacy enhances the level of self-set goals, strengthens commitment to those goals, and thereby improves performance, according to (Locke and Latham, 2015). I planned my learning processes with Fikri after agreeing to be a speaker at weekly activities. These plans included determining daily learning materials, tasks I needed to complete, and targets to achieve my goals. Although I rarely practiced English after high school and during the first two years of college, I committed to using the Duolingo application for at least five minutes every day from my third year of college to improve my English speaking. Effective learning planning has guided me towards achieving my objectives. The success of any professional learning activity, regardless of its content, structure, or format, primarily depends on how well it is planned (Guskey, 2014). After following my planned activities, even though I couldn't speak English like a native speaker, I felt a sense of emotional satisfaction. This aligns with goal-setting theory by (Locke and Latham, 2015), which suggests that achieving goals leads to a pleasurable state of emotional satisfaction

Setting specific goals and planning the learning process is essential to achieve the desired learning outcomes. My experience of planning learning activities with Fikri and then using the Duolingo app shows the importance of setting clear goals and creating a structured plan to meet those goals. This is in line with the theory that goal setting improves motivation and performance, as it provides clear direction and measurable targets. (Locke and Latham, 2015) also add that effective goal setting and planning help in maintaining focus and measuring progress. By breaking down learning goals into manageable tasks and regularly assessing my progress, I ensure that I stay on track and make steady progress toward my learning goals.

Use of Resources

In learning, utilizing various sources as references is crucial. References serve as sources of information found in books or other related materials, including journals, articles, newspapers, magazines, videos, and internet sources, (Power, 1998). According to (Brown and Palincsar, 2018), references are essential in ensuring that students acquire reliable knowledge. (Mezirow, 2000) stated that the sources can be a supporting successful learning as outlined by the transformational learning theory.

It is also important to assess the credibility of the sources students will study. Source credibility is defined by two main factors: expertise and trustworthiness. Expertise refers to the source's ability to provide valid information, while trustworthiness indicates the source's willingness to offer truthful information, irrespective of personal interests. Sources that possess a high level of both expertise and trustworthiness are more likely to effect positive change compared to those lacking these characteristics, according to (Gardikiotis and Crano, 2015). As a self-directed learner, I have naturally utilized various credible sources of knowledge that I've discovered. Initially, my main source for learning English was my friend named Fikri, who hails from Bogor.

He had been attending private English courses since third grade in elementary school. Studying with Fikri, I also relied on the third edition of the Indonesian-English dictionary by Hassan Shadily and John M. Echols as a helpful guide. Additionally, I used internet sources such as YouTuber Fiki Naki's videos and the Duolingo application, which he recommended, throughout my college years.

Utilizing a variety of resources, including peer guidance, dictionaries, and digital tools, is essential for effective self-study. My reliance on resources such as Fikri, dictionaries, and language learning apps reflects the importance of accessing and utilizing credible and useful materials. This supports the idea by (Knowles, 1975) that learners should identify and use appropriate resources to support their learning. The credibility and relevance of resources greatly affect the learning process. By choosing reliable and expert sources, I improve the quality of my learning experience and ensure that the information I obtain is accurate and useful.

Motivation and Persistence

Self-directed learning is a powerful approach to acquiring new skills and knowledge, driven by the learner's own initiative and motivation. (Francom, 2010) stated, two crucial elements that significantly enhance the effectiveness of self-directed learning are intrinsic motivation and perseverance.

Intrinsic motivation is an internal desire to engage in an activity for its own sake, deriving pleasure and satisfaction from the activity, according to (Victori and Lockhart, 1995). In my journey of learning English, the initial trigger was a strong desire to understand English-language films. This practical need gradually transformed into genuine enjoyment of the learning process. My motivation evolved from merely wanting to understand films to finding joy in discovering a new language, mastering new words, and comprehending complex sentences. This intrinsic motivation fuelled my commitment into learning. The joy found in each small achievement created positive feedback, making the learning process itself rewarding. This cycle of self-reinforcement is characteristic of intrinsic motivation and has been a powerful driver for me in my self-directed learning journey.

While intrinsic motivation provided the foundation, it was perseverance that kept me going through challenges. Learning a new language is not a smooth journey; I faced many obstacles, from pronunciation difficulties to complex grammar rules. Perseverance is the unwavering determination to continue despite these obstacles.

In my journey, perseverance was evident in various phases. I volunteered to give a speech, stepping out of my comfort zone to practice speaking English in public. This bold step not only improved my speaking skills but also built my confidence. Participation in specialized study programs provided structured learning and additional resources, further supporting my progress. Consistent use of language learning apps like Duolingo also played a crucial role for me in maintaining momentum. Daily exercises on Duolingo, with gamified lessons and instant feedback, helped sustain interest and motivation. My commitment to daily practice demonstrated perseverance, ensuring steady progress over time.

Intrinsic motivation and perseverance are the main drivers of the success of independent learning. My initial motivation from an interest in film grew into a deeper enjoyment of learning English, which underpinned my efforts. Perseverance through challenges, such as difficulties in pronunciation and grammar, illustrates how sustained commitment is necessary to overcome obstacles and achieve long-term learning goals. (Francom, 2010) added, motivation can be intrinsic and extrinsic, and maintaining a balance between the two can increase the effectiveness of learning.

Regularly reviewing and reaffirming personal goals and interests helps maintain motivation, while perseverance through adversity ensures continuous progress.

Self-Assessment and Reflection

In the journey of learning a language, whether it is English or any other language, self-assessment and reflection play crucial roles in shaping proficiency and understanding, according to (Costa and Kallick, 2003). These practices are not merely academic exercises but essential tools that empower learners to take control of their progress and adjust their strategies for continuous improvement.

Self-assessment involves a keen awareness of one's abilities and shortcomings. It requires recognizing when skills have weakened due to lack of practice or other factors. For example, my awareness of a decline in my English skills due to a lack of practice prompts me to take proactive measures to revive my learning momentum. I might revisit vocabulary, engage in conversation exercises, or seek out immersive experiences to restore my English proficiency. Reflection enhances the impact of self-assessment by examining the experiences that shape learning. By analyzing mistakes made during speeches or evaluating the effectiveness of study habits, reflection provides insights into the self-directed learning process.

Integrating self-assessment and reflection into language learning involves setting aside specific moments to honestly evaluate progress. These practices are not passive activities but active tools that help language learners navigate challenges and celebrate successes. By recognizing when skills need to be refined and reflecting on the learning journey, learners not only improve their language abilities but also deepen their understanding of themselves as learners. Ultimately, integrating these practices fosters resilience, adaptability, and a lifelong commitment to mastering language skills.

(Costa and Kallick, 2003) added that self-assessment and reflection are essential for continuous improvement and effective learning. My awareness of the decline in skills due to lack of practice and subsequent actions to revive my English proficiency shows the role of self-assessment in identifying areas that need to be improved. Reflection helps in analyzing learning experiences, understanding mistakes, and adapting strategies for better outcomes. Regular self-assessment and reflection encourage learners to take ownership of their learning journey. By critically evaluating progress and adjusting learning strategies, learners can navigate challenges more effectively and develop a deeper understanding of their strengths and areas of growth.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored the multifaceted journey of self-directed learning in English, drawing from personal experiences documented through thematic analysis. The findings reveal the significance of various self-directed learning strategies and their impacts on language acquisition.

The initial exposure to English through Hollywood movies during Islamic boarding school holidays ignited a profound interest in the language. This informal learning environment demonstrated the powerful role of intrinsic motivation and informal media in language acquisition. The process highlighted that even in the absence of formal instruction, self-motivated engagement with language through enjoyable media can lay the groundwork for learning.

Taking initiative by volunteering to participate in weekly English speeches at the boarding school marked a pivotal moment in the learning journey. This proactive approach, supported by peer guidance and consistent practice, exemplified the essence of self-directed learning. It

underscores the value of stepping out of one's comfort zone, seeking opportunities, and using peer support to enhance language skills.

The special foreign language program in high school provided a structured environment that complemented self-directed efforts. The program's rigorous approach to grammar, vocabulary, and public performance offered a formalized framework for deepening language proficiency. This experience illustrated how structured programs, when integrated with personal motivation, can significantly enhance learning outcomes.

The transition to a college dormitory focused on classical Islamic studies presented challenges due to limited English practice opportunities. This phase highlighted the importance of continuous exposure and practice in maintaining language proficiency. It emphasized the need for a balanced environment that supports both specialized and general learning needs. The use of the Duolingo app marked a revival of English skills through a modern, self-directed approach. Setting achievable daily goals and utilizing technology showcased the effectiveness of digital tools in maintaining and improving language skills. This experience reflected the impact of self-motivation and consistency in leveraging accessible resources for ongoing language development.

The findings align with Knowles' self-directed learning theory, demonstrating that effective language learning requires a combination of self-initiated actions, goal setting, resource utilization, motivation, and self-assessment. The study highlights that intrinsic interest and proactive engagement are crucial for initiating and sustaining learning, clear goals and structured plans guide learners toward achieving their objectives, enhancing motivation and performance, utilizing credible and varied resources enriches the learning process and supports effective self-directed learning, intrinsic motivation and perseverance drive continued progress, even in the face of challenges, also regular self-assessment and reflection facilitate ongoing improvement and adaptability in learning strategies. Finally, this study underscores the importance of personal initiative, strategic planning, and consistent practice in self-directed language learning. The integration of intrinsic motivation with structured and informal learning environments can lead to meaningful language acquisition and proficiency.

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