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### INVESTIGATING THE LEARNERS' READINESS FOR SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE THROUGH DIGITAL LITERACY

*Zara Naseer<sup>1</sup>, Eman Tahir<sup>2</sup>, Yasmeen Qadir<sup>3</sup>, Arooj Riaz<sup>4</sup>*

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> Visiting lecturer at the department of English in Ghazi University, Dera Ghazi Khan

Email: [1zaraansari4488@gmail.com](mailto:zaraansari4488@gmail.com) [2emantahir315@gmail.com](mailto:emantahir315@gmail.com)

[3yasmeenqadir34@gmail.com](mailto:yasmeenqadir34@gmail.com) [4aroorjriaz40@gmail.com](mailto:aroorjriaz40@gmail.com)

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#### **ABSTRACT**

In Pakistan, little is known about learners' autonomous learning, especially at in Southern Punjab. To properly take into account the benefits of this learning style for learners of ESL, it is essential to comprehend their preparedness for self-directed learning in order to advance their English learning abilities. The current investigation used a survey methodology to investigate pupil's level of self-directedness and willingness to use self-directed learning in order to improve their English learning capabilities. A total of 100 students of BS program filled out a questionnaire. The collected data was analyzed through descriptive statistics. The results demonstrated that almost all of the pupils had a fair amount of self-directedness, with little distinction between them and the exceptionally gifted kids. The outcome of the study showed that participants' preparedness to integrate self-directed learning into their English learning as foreign language had a positive correlation with their level of self-directedness.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

E-learning, outermost studying, learning from home, outside of the classroom learning, as well as computer assisted language learning (CALL) are all forms of self-study, wherein the learners actively take responsibility of their learning and in this way they become less dependent on their teacher in physical classroom in the conventional sense. This transition is identified as a standard transition by Holec (1979), the readiness to oversee one's own learning, thus according to Holec, covers a broad spectrum of abilities to assert command over

one's own learning practices including setting aims, identifying study techniques and tactics, deciding content materials to learn, along with supervising as well as evaluating one's own learning progress. This puts absolute autonomy, along with ultimate accountability on the individuals' shoulders.

The terminology "digital literacy" was originally employed by Paul Gilster (1997: 1) in his book *Digital Literacy*, which characterized it as the "potential to interpret as well as to apply information in multiple formats from a broad variety of sources when it is displayed via digital devices."

Web application, web tools, telecommunications and storage services, portable devices, and many other mediums of technology are all components of digital technology (Ng, 2012; Mohammadyari and Singh, 2015). Learners make use of digital technologies for a wide range of educational activities, including reading and sending an email, utilizing E-learning systems, conducting online quizzes, collaborating in discussion groups, and accessing E-books or E-periodicals (Jones et al., 2010; Waycott et al., 2010). Higher education universities are benefiting from progress of modern technologies to offer their learners a diversity of education and learning opportunities. In accordance with Pérez-holistic Tornero's (2010) paradigm, researcher interpreted digital literacy as the development of cognitive competence for utilizing digital technologies (information and communication technologies), taken in a wider sense, in relation to the attainment of essential practical and intellectual competencies for learners to develop themselves in the digital world.

### ***Research Objectives***

This current study focuses on the following objectives:

1. To determine whether or not both male & female get an equal opportunity to be successful in their autonomous learning of English through digital literacy.
2. To explore to what extent digital literacy benefits learners in improving their academic performance.

### ***Research Questions***

This study is aimed to answer following questions:

1. Do both male and female get an equal opportunity to be successful in their self directed learning of English through digital literacy?
2. How does digital literacy aid learners in improving their academic achievement?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Autonomy has acquired absorption in modern civilization under the effect of educational theories including such cognitive learning theories, humanistic psychology, and constructivist learning theories.

When digesting English press, Olmedo (2015) discovered that individuals pay greater attention to message than to linguistic form/structure. The most of the primary as well as secondary EFL students in her survey revealed that they sought to understand the context of the songs overall rather than focusing on the verses. When viewing movies, they also pay attention to the audio prior to actually reading the captions.

Rosell-Aguilar (2013) did a study of iTunes U subscribers at the Oxford University in England about their use of such a site's audio-books. He noted that the most of language learners (about 60%) were engaged in listening to podcasts doing other things like housekeeping, exercise, or travelling, but just about 40% listened to the podcasts exclusively. The majority of consumers preferred to listen to them on their smart-phones. Only about 10% of them made notes while listening, furthermore half of them noted down seldom or never, whereas approximately 33% of them utilized the subtitles regularly while listening to them. 'The transition to and usage on smart phones, the low utilization of transcripts, and the fact that many participants listen while doing something else suggests that most of the participants are listening to the learning material as a casual activity,' the author reported (p. 86). He went on to say that this inattentive style to listening might have its unique merits in regards of familiarizing students with the foreign language's sounds, rhythms, as well as intonation strategies.

Wong and Nunan (2011) obtained similar outcomes during their research of 110 individuals of university in Hong Kong who were designated as "more productive" or "less productive" (based on their accomplishments on a validated proficiency exam sheet). Their findings indicated that more competent students spend slightly more time outside of their classroom mastering English than less competent students. Likewise, Nunan reported in an earlier work that "the 'outstanding' foreign language student find out techniques to practice his language outside of classroom" (Nunan, 1991; cited in Nunan, 1997: 16). This argument is consistent with the investigation about proficient learners of second language, which indicated that second language growth is motivated in part by the learners' ambition to practice the target language far beyond the classroom (Hyland, 2004).

But at the other hand, even if learners have a wide variety of resources in the Foreign Language, they may not always be mindful of all of the approaches they may apply to productively learn the target language. This is a dilemma that scholars have repeatedly highlighted interested in out-of-school learning approaches. Overall, they highly recommended raising teacher knowledge and understanding (Hyland, 2004; Kuppens, 2010; Lai & Gu, 2011; Lamb, 2002; Nunan, 1997; Pickard, 1996; Sundqvist, 2009; and Wong & Nunan, 2011), as well as implementing a component into teacher education projects (Pickard, 1996) and in the curriculum of school (Wong & Nunan, 2011) to train learners how to identify as well as make use of favorable resources along with approaches for refining foreign language in their peculiar settings of learning. Employing an exploratory approach, Qunyan Maggi Zhong (2022) examined qualitatively how an individual connects with technologically induced settings to meet their educational objectives as well as demands, along with how his

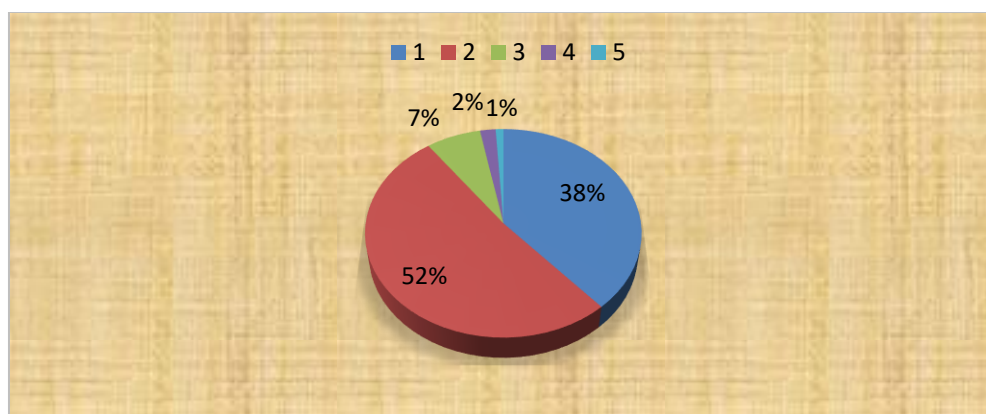
autonomy develops by means of digital literacy in the setting of New Zealand. The results of the study endorsed the idea that learners' beliefs about their self-reliance are both resilient and powerful, along with they suggested that in addition to the learner's environmental variables, behavioral variables, such as the educator's guidance as well as the learning environment, also serve an analytical part in their development of different facets of learners' autonomy.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is comprised of quantitative method to answer the research questions. The researcher used questionnaire as a data collection tool to collect the needed data from the target audience. The population of the study was the students of Ghazi University. Due to the limited resources, the researcher selected the sample consisted of 100 students using random sampling approach, who were enrolled in BS English Literature and Linguistics. To get the gender balanced outcomes researcher divided the sample into two groups male (n=50) and female (n=50). The data collected through questionnaires was analyzed by IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version21.0.

### Findings and Results

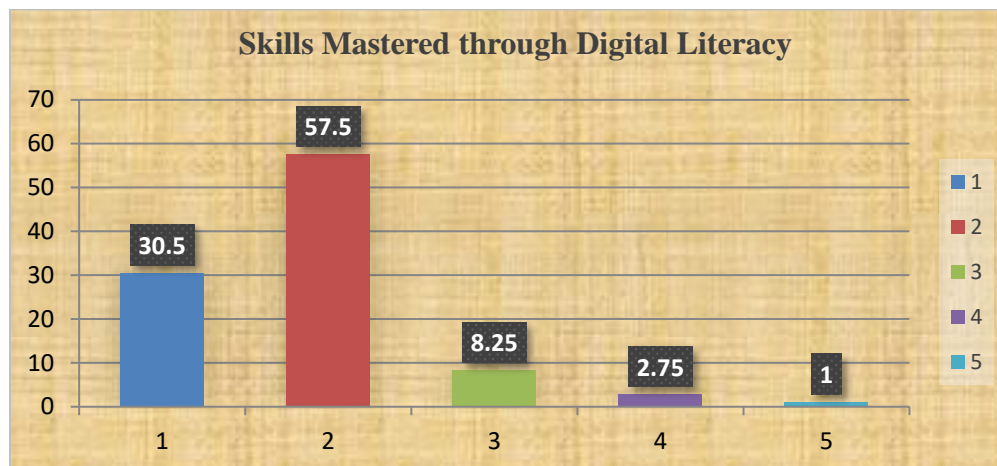
Total 100 learners from Department of English in Ghazi University participated in this research. The results of the questionnaires are presented in the form of charts. In all these figures given below, 1 stands for Strongly Agree, 2 stands for Agree, 3 stands for Neutral, 4 stands for Disagree, and 5 stands for Strongly Disagree.



**Figure 1:** Willingness and Mobile Apps for Autonomous Learning of English

These findings show that 38% of the respondents displayed their willingness for adoption of autonomous learning of English, and have different mobile apps for the sake of English learning by rating 1 on Likert scale, 52% ranked 2 for these questions, 7% of them were neutral about it, 2% of ranked 4 for it and 1% of the respondents reported 5 for these questions. By combining both the percentages of strongly agree (38%) and agree (52%) which makes the 90% of the whole sample of the study. Among which 60% were boys and 40% were girls, while on the other hand 6% of the respondents didn't express their willingness for autonomous learning through digital literacy by ticking on the neutral. As a result researcher has found out that majority of the students opted for learning

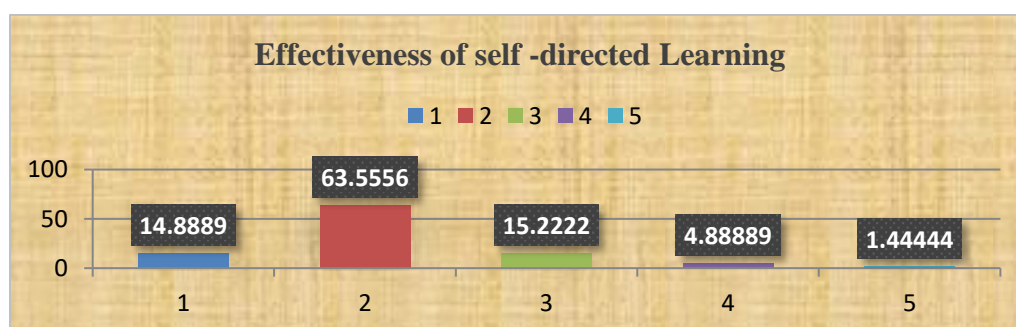
English autonomously through digital literacy due to their motivation of learning. And boys have been discovered to be more involved in it than the girls.



**Figure 2:** Skills mastered through digital literacy

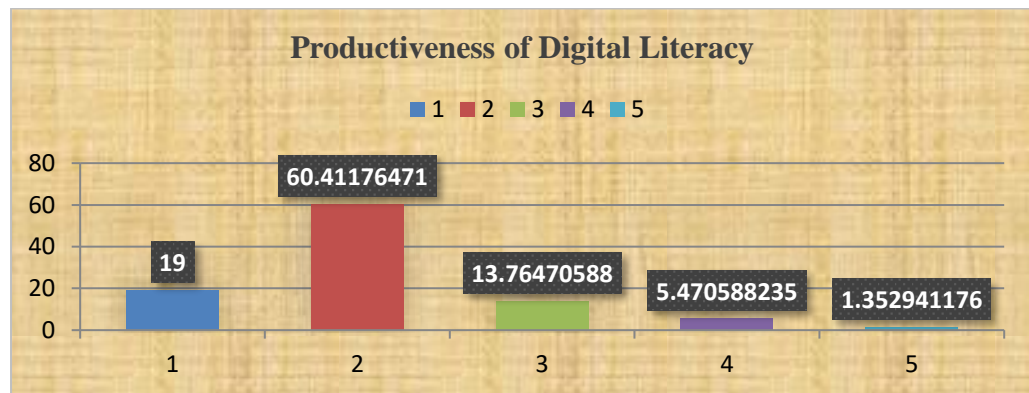
The given figure 2 highlights the percentage of participants that to what extent they have practiced their language skills including grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and fluency through digital literacy.

It makes 88% of the whole sample by combining both the percentages of SA (30.5%) and A (57.5%) who responded positively in regard of the skills practiced through digital literacy in their self-directed learning of English as a foreign language. In 88% of the sample 42.25% were girls while 45.75 % were boys however it asserts that exercising linguistic skills which includes grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, as well as fluency has helped boys more than girls. 4% of the overall sample voted negatively to the assertions about the skills practiced through digital literacy by integrating the percentages of strongly disagree (1%) and disagree (3%) responses. After comparing it to the proportion of strongly agree and agree, which is 88%, researcher found no significant difference between the genders of the (4%) 2.5% girls and 1.25% boys. While 8% of the respondents stayed neutral about it. Therefore, considering the findings, it is evident that self-directed learning of English through digital literacy assisted the learners to improve their vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and fluency. And the research's participants who were boys have primarily benefited from it.



**Figure 3:** Effectiveness of self-directed learning

It makes 78% of the sample after combining the percentage of both SA and A, which is higher than the percentage of SD and D which makes total 6% of the whole sample. While on the other hand 16% of the participants decided to tick neutral against the statements. But the results differed in regard of gender, in 78% of the respondents 40% were boys and 38% were girls. From these results it is evident that boys have been found very efficient in terms of their self directed learning of English as a foreign language through digital literacy.



**Figure 4:** Productiveness of digital literacy

In Figure 4, 79% of the respondents responded optimistically towards the effectiveness of the digital literacy after combining the response of both SA and A which were 19% and 60% respectively. Among which 41% were boys and 38% were girls. From the results it is evident that boys have taken great advantage of their digital literacy than girls. While on the other hand 7% of the respondents were those people who disregarded with effectiveness of digital literacy in reference to their self-directed learning. And 14% of the participants remained neutral. The researcher has found through the findings that digital literacy has made learners more productive in ways such as widening their knowledge, strengthening their ability to surf the internet for the sake of learning, and developing their willingness to direct their own learning.

**DISCUSSIONS**

The aim of this study was to answer the following questions; 1. Do both male and female get an equal opportunity to be successful in their self directed learning of English through digital literacy? 2. How does digital literacy aid learners in improving their academic achievement? Considering that today's undergraduate university students have a strong understanding about how to use modern digital technology in their daily practices (e.g., attempting to locate information on the internet, watching YouTube videos, listening to songs, using social networking sites, and so forth.), it is not really unexpected that a relatively high percentage of students seek internet resources helpful than printed resources such as printed books, school libraries and so on. The outcomes of the questionnaire simply illustrated that the use of digital technology in EFL learning is an integral ingredient in facilitating autonomous learning practices.

Numerous characteristics of self directed learning and also some elements of teacher-centered education seemed to exist among all the individuals. As per the facts, most of learners are short on constructivism seeing as they are dependent on their educators to learn English. The results demonstrate that while participants valued self directed learning, they also desired instructors to still be available throughout their formal learning of English language to oversee learning practices of students.

The statistics showed that the number of the tasks that the students took part in often incorporated the usage of digital technology. As a consequence, institutions are supposed to facilitate learners in making the best use of technologies towards successful learning of English. Institutions are supposed to support suggestions about which tools to employ, instructions about how to utilize the resources, counseling on cognitive as well as meta-cognitive approaches, employing modern technology in classrooms, plus giving assignment for homework including the usage of technological resources could both be the examples of the role of the educators.

The findings of this research have discovered that most of the participants valued the self-directed learning of English as a foreign language through digital literacy. The researcher has found out that both of the genders i.e. boys and girls showed their favorable perception in terms of self-directed learning using the devices of modern technology with minor difference in the analysis which was not discovered in Daflizar's (2020) study. However researcher has found out that both of the genders are eager to attain the learner autonomy through digital Literacy.

According to Phillips, Turnbull, and He (2015), self-directed learning capability encompasses three primary characteristics: determination, autonomy, and an ambition to acquire knowledge. According to Prior et al. (2016), individuals that display a high level of self-esteem appear more competent, independent and committed. Learners had an optimistic perspective upon self-directed English language acquisition via digital literacy as a consequence of the study.

Findings of the study highlight that digital literacy helps language learners to a great extent to improve their academic achievement. The researcher came to the conclusion that a pleasant learner outlook as well as comprehensive literacy of modern technologies can strengthen levels of self-confidence, which then in sequence enhances online behaviors including learning management, peer engagement, system collaboration, and facilitator intervention. Digital literacy helped language learners to strengthen their language competencies, to add more digital literacy has affected the confidence, critical thinking, communication skills and research skills of the students in positive direction.

## **CONCLUSION**

The following are the conclusions that can be obtained from this investigation. To commence with, the data show that learners do use advanced technologies into their learning procedures, using it to govern multiple parts of their language acquisition process. This highlights how digital literacy might be employed to assist the autonomous language learning practice. According to the results, it

is indicated that the students in this investigation make the most use of their comprehension of advanced technologies to strengthen their, vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and fluency.

The second significant result was that the individuals in this study get benefit from digital literacy to control numerous parts of their language acquisition process, especially utilizing digital literacy to assist them to acquire their language learning objectives as well as empower themselves by attempting to make language learning a fun procedure incorporating modern technological equipment. The participants in this research emerge to be making use of their digital literacy mostly as accessory to their learning practices, and also to interact with some other academics to exercise and strengthen their language competencies. These results demonstrate that learner instruction, not just in language acquisition principles, but even in meta-cognitive knowledge concerning technology-mediated language development, is fundamental in influencing learners to explore modern technologies to assist their language development.

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