

### **3K: EASY KEYS TO DEVELOP AN AUTONOMOUS LEARNER**

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#### **Abstract**

Autonomy learning is one of issues dealing with the science and technology development. It is the appropriate approach for non-traditional university students. Autonomy learning aims to develop the ability of identifying and maximizing one's own potential to achieve learning goals. Positive correlation between autonomy learning and student's academic ability requires the students to have effective keys to be an autonomous learner. The required effective keys are 3K: keys of identifying, conceptualizing, and doing. The first key is the students should identify their own potential. The second key is the students should be able to conceptualize approaches to achieve learning goals. The third key is doing what have been conceptualized in the second key. It is expected that these three keys can be done by non-traditional university students who want to succeed their learning process.

**Keywords: 3K, Autonomy Learning, Autonomous Learner, Non-traditional University**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Autonomy learning is a familiar approach for mature students. It is characterized by proactive learning ability to identify necessary learning references and implementing effective learning strategy for particular learning goals (Knowles; Pilling-Cormick & Garrison, in Francis & Flanigan, 2012:2). As an autonomous learner, university students are required to be responsible of their own learning goals and learning opportunities (Nunan in Chen, 2012). Particularly, for English Education students of STKIP PGRI Ponorogo, the autonomy learning ability is interesting to study since students have various background and competence. They are asked to master English skills as a foreign language, both studying linguistic branch and implementing teaching strategies.

Teaching and learning process in STKIP PGRI Ponorogo starts at 14.30 WIB. Since classes begin in the afternoon, many students work in the morning. The amount of students working part time and full time tends to increase as they are in the higher level of semester. Some of them not only work, but also get married when they are in the last semester. Choy (in Buvoltz et al, 2008) categorized these students as non-traditional university students. Non-traditional university students usually have family, working responsibility, and another life condition which influence their success in the learning process. Unlike traditional university students who focus studying only, non-traditional university students tend to take flexible and accelerated classes, so they are able to accomplish both for their family and for their education needs (Choy in Buvoltz et al, 2008). According to this phenomenon, it is necessary to implement learning approach which is appropriate with mature students. Merriam & Caffarella (in Cercone 2008: 139) stated that mature students and non-traditional university students have the same background and the same responsibilities influences learning process. Since they have other responsibilities, it is a big consequence to pursue their high education. Most of non-traditional university students have high motivation, task-oriented, but do not have optimal cognitive because they have to study and work.

In the study conducted by Chamot and Kupper (in McDonough, 2001), it is revealed that successful university students implement accurate and various learning strategies. While those students who do not achieve their learning goals do not have accurate learning strategies. In the language department students, the most important things are having cognitive control for their efforts and having control for their mental process. They have to realize their own learning strategies, thus it can be guided by their supervisors (McDonough, 2001)

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **The Nature of Autonomy Learning**

In the preceding description, it has been explained that the concept of autonomy learning. It is stated that an autonomous student is able to define his or her own learning goals and create their own learning opportunities (Nunan in Chen, 2012).

Autonomy learning was firstly proposed by Holec (in Guo, 2012) in 1981. It is reported that autonomy learning is the student's ability to be responsible for his or her own learning. This definition is described as the competence to define learning process, learning methods and strategies; to monitor learning procedures; and to evaluate what has been learnt.

Guo (2012) proposed other definitions dealing with autonomy learning. For instance, Huttunen described autonomy learning as a certain learning behavior and a monitoring or an evaluating learning process done in groups or individual. While Cotterall believed that autonomy learning is a one's self learning control by implementing particular learning strategies. In line with those theories, Benson also argued that autonomy learning is the ability to be responsible for one's learning process. In addition, each individual has different degree of autonomy learning (Guo, 2012)

Ryan (in Shen et al, 2009) stated that autonomy learning cannot be defined as the right to organize or to decide whatever students want. Learning process guided by the supervisors and students' learning autonomy are two variables which complete and support each other (Reeve in Shen et al, 2009). It means that students' motivation will develop as well as the optimal guidance given by supervisors which supports to achieve the learning goals (Skinner and Belmont in Shen et al, 2009)

Based on that explanation, it can be concluded that autonomy learning is a particular learning behavior implemented by an individual. It is seen by the ability of identifying one's own learning need, deciding one's own learning goal, determining one's own appropriate learning strategies, and monitoring and evaluating the learning process. An autonomous student is not a student who does not need a teaching and learning process with his or her supervisor. An autonomous student still needs a teaching and learning atmosphere in the classroom to develop autonomy learning.

Moreover, Zoghi and Dehghan (2012) defined autonomy learning as an active manager to control one's learning process and tasks from supervisors are facilitators to support and develop student's autonomy learning. In addition, emotional intelligence or self control plays an important role to evolve autonomy learning.

### **Autonomy Learning Model**

There are three models to describe what influences the student's autonomy learning. These three models are seen from three different perspectives. Those models see the autonomy learning as a personal inherent completeness, learning process, and learning context (Song and Hill, 2007: 28). According to model proposed by Candy (1991), autonomy learning is a personal inherent including emotional, moral, and intelligent control. This ability is reflected in the personal managerial and responsibility. According to this model, autonomy learning is a process of autonomy learner to accomplish the task. This ability is represented within learner achievement and self-learning competence. Meanwhile, the capability to learn responsibly is closely related to the learning environment. Learning environment gives choices and opportunities to give self-guidance and minimizes the high-pressure evaluation, goals, and requirements. A good learning environment also gives positive and informal support and context where students' opinion is also accepted (Ryan and

Deci in Shen et al, 2009). The lecturers who support student’s autonomy learning are those who give information for students to propose their own solution towards their learning problems (Shen et al, 2009). Unfortunately, this model does not explain the details of recent learning context in this technology era. While in the model proposed by Brockett and Hiemstra (1991), autonomy learning is emphasized individual competence to achieve a particular goal. This model also emphasizes individual competence to control required stages in the achievement of autonomy learning. Similar with the previous model, this model describes traditional learning context. The model suggested by Garrison (1997) has a significant different from two previous models. According to this model, there are three variables which interacts one to another to develop autonomy learning. Those variables are self-management, independent control, and motivation. A self-management is a competence to manage learning sources. This competence also includes the ability to control learning context to achieve learning goals, both by individual and by groups. In this model, the learning context is not explained more like two previous models.

### **Autonomy Learning Strategy**

According to O’Malley and Chamot (in Wang, 2010) autonomy learning strategy is divided into three: cognitive strategy, metacognitive strategy, and social mediation. Cognitive strategy is technically done by reading, memorizing, noting, and asking questions. Metacognitive strategy includes study planning, data collection, self-supervision, self-evaluation, study reflection, and arranging files for study. While social mediation are having rules in a group, having a group work with colleagues, having an effective communication, and helping evaluate colleague’s work.

Metacognitive strategy is the most prominent strategy of autonomy learning. Guo (2012) reported that metacognitive strategy is effective to improve student’s autonomy learning for listening skill. In the reading skill, Sariçoban (2012) divides this strategy into 12. Those 12 strategies are: (1) considering and mapping materials have been taught; (2) having an attention; (3) having directed attention; (4) selective attention; (5) organizing the progress; (6) deciding goals; (7) identifying language learning goals; (8) planning language learning goals; (9) looking for practices; (10) having self-management; (11) having self-monitoring; (12) doing self-monitoring. From his research, these 12 metacognitive strategies are significantly related to autonomy learning for reading class (Sariçoban, 2012). Flexibility in arranging self-learning pattern is metacognitive character. In the study conducted by Kupetz and Ziegenmeyer (2006), this flexibility supports the autonomy learning in the English learning, both in the classroom and in online.

Those descriptions give a general explanation of various strategies used by university students to develop autonomy learning. Metacognitive strategy is a dominant strategy applied for autonomy learning process. By implementing this strategy, students’ managerial system is active for learning process. While implementing this strategy, students are flexible to determine learning pattern.

### **Merits and Drawbacks of Autonomy Learning**

Autonomy learning has merits if it is compared to traditional class. According to some studies by Long, Pao-Nan, and Wei-Fan (in Francis and Flanigan, 2012: 2), autonomy learning shows a positive correlation by students’ achievement. Moreover, the advantages of autonomy learning are: (1) giving the same opportunities for different level of students; (2) encouraging students’ confidence and responsibility; (3) focusing the students’ attention. These strengths focus on individual learning.

From those merits, there are some drawbacks of autonomy learning. The drawbacks are: (1) student-teacher interaction is less intensive since autonomy learning focuses on individual learner; (2) some teachers and learners are quite uncomfortable because different teacher and learner may

have different learning strategy; (3) learning achievements of each learner is different one to another; (4) all learning components need an extra hard-working to achieve goals as what have been planned in the beginning.

If there is no difficulty, a learner will not ask for help. The learners will be too confident because they feel so certain with their ability to overcome all difficulties. However, they still need teacher's guidance. Teacher and learners who used to have a traditional-class will not be easily engaged in the implementation of autonomy learning. The different level of metacognitive, cognitive, and social competence causes different learning strategy to achieve the goals. For this reason, there will be different achievement. Thus, different achievement will result different task completion.

### **Related of Relevant Studies**

In the study proposed by Zohrabi (2011), it is revealed that autonomy learning conducted by him was successfully achieved by involving his students in the curriculum development. In the planning stage, the students were asked to determine their learning goal, needs, ambitions, and their own classes. In the implementation stage, what had been planned was executed through communicative learning and various practices, so these strategies encouraged the students to be more aware towards learning goals and to be more responsible for the entire learning plan (Zohrabi, 2011). Autonomy learning was the key of the successful learning when the class implemented a student-centered approach. Sockett and Toffoli (2012) has proved in their two months-research towards informal learning for English class.

They mastered English independently through some practices such as listening and reading online in the internet using English. A study by Chen (2012) also revealed that the use of computer-based multimedia was also effective to improve students' autonomy learning. While, Smith and Craig (2013) found that the use of computer was effective to develop autonomy learning for English learning.

According to a study by Buvoltz et al. (2008), in the non-traditional university students' context, similar with the phenomenon in STKIP PGRI Ponorogo, the ability of autonomy learning was consistent with emotional intelligence. Control of feeling, hopes, optimism, confidence, adaptation, encouragement to achive goals, communication, conflict management, team-work ability which associate with emotional intelligence are the essential elements for autonomy learning development.

According to Astawan (in Handayani, Dantes, and Suastra, 2013: 3), autonomy learning model could encourage students to have an initiative to analyze necessary learning needs. This model also encouraged to determine their learning goals, either independently or dependently. Moreover, it also identified learning sources, chose and implemented appropriate learning strategy and evaluated their own learning achievement.

### **DISCUSSION**

Autonomy learning depends on individual competence. It develops one's ability to maximize all capabilities he has, so he can achieve particular learning goals that have been planned. In this technology and globalization era, having good autonomy learning is so necessary. When one has good autonomy learning, he can be more successful than others in the competition. Therefore, he will be ready to deal with any problems in this globalization era. Being an autonomous learner will have a high motivation to learn, to be independent, to be responsible, and to have a good

managerial. Developing autonomy learning for students needs effective strategies. However, these strategies should be implemented by the students themselves in daily life.

As the most important part of autonomy learning, the student can apply easy and effective ways to be an autonomous learner. From literature review, there are three stages that should be done by the student to be an autonomus learner. These three stages can be abbreviated to be 3K. The descriptions of 3K are (1) key of identifying; (2)key of conceptualizing; (3) and key of doing. In the first stage, a student should be able to identify things related to autonomy learning. The first identified thing is self-competence. Required self-competence for developing autonomy learning is identifying strengths and weaknesses of learning style. A student should know appropriate learning styles. Those learning styles are depended on student cognitive competence such as visual, auditory, kinesthetic. It can be depended on what strategy that gives the most positive impact such as learning with music background and learning in groups with a teacher to guide the group.

The students also should identify things that can motivate them to learn and to achieve goals. This learning motivation can be internal or external. Identifying the motivation involves the knowledge to recognize both positive and negative emotional because emotional gives impact for learning motivation. The students are also expected to recognize the proposed goals. The literacy of provided and effective learning resources will influence to learning plan which will be taken. These learning sources can be books, learning videos, articles, and journals that can be beneficial for students.

Identifying effective place and time for study which are in line with the learning goals is expected to make the learning plan more optimal. By doing the first stage, the students are considered to analyze all learning needs. The analysis result will thus be the early step for second stage. If the students have difficulties in the first stage, it is a must to ask guidance to the teacher or the supervisor.

In the second stage, key of conceptualizing, the students should be able to use the analysis result from the first stage to make a learning plan. This learning plan involves the use of learning source, time allocation, and effective place to study. This learning plan can also include another learning activity that can support autonomy learning such as having class discussion, having consultation with competent supervisor. This involves the hardest until the easiest learning stages. This learning plan can also be arranged based on planned themes or activities which are related to learning goals. If the students have identified their own potential, so this learning plan will be easier to make. Advices fro the supervisor or partners in study group can be used as the basic for effective learning plan.

The third stage, key of doing, is a follow-up activity from two previous stages. Planning will not be succesfull without any follow-up action. The students are hoped to implement stages as well as what have been planned in the previous stages. The expectation is based on study plan that has been well arranged. However, if students find difficulties or there are some struggles in this stage, the students are supposed to have innovation to overcome those problems. This third stage can encourage the students to be more discipline and to be more responsible for any decision that has been made.

The three stages can be implemented in the context either traditional or non-traditional. In the society, autonomy learning is the key to succeed. These three stages can be used in the real life after finishing formal education. Basically, education and learning are the keys to determine the quality of human resources.

### CONCLUSIONS

Autonomy learning is a learning process which aims to develop student's capability and responsibility in learning process. Various definitions and theories of autonomy learning reveal that it is important to develop student's self-competence. There is a positive correlation between autonomy learning and the significant improvement of student's competence. Introducing a student who used to have a traditional-class to an autonomous class is not easy. Therefore, by implementing the 3K, those students who used to have a traditional-class are expected to develop their autonomy learning. The 3K stages are (1) key of identifying; (2) key of conceptualizing; (3) and key of doing. The first stage has many things related on how the students recognize their own potential learning by the guidance from teachers, supervisor, and counselor study guide. The analysis result from the identification of all learning potential is the fundamental for the second stage, key of conceptualizing. In the second stage, the students will make a learning plan individually or in groups to achieve the goals. The third stage, key of doing, the students do each plan as well as what have been listed in the learning plan. These three stages can be done by non-traditional university students who want to develop their autonomy learning so they can reach the learning goals successfully.

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## International Seminar on Education “Education Trends for Future Society”

Teacher Training and Education Faculty, Muhammadiyah University of Ponorogo, August 30, 2016

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