

Learning Center with Self-Directed Learning: A Foundation for TOEFL Learning Activity

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Learning Center with Self-Directed Learning: A Foundation for TOEFL Learning Activity

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Abstract

As a proficiency test, TOEFL requires its learners a special learning strategy to master it. In order to find out an appropriate strategy, learners should understand its characteristics, one of which is autonomous learning. The paper attempts to figure out that learning center (LC) can provide adult learners opportunity to learn TOEFL effectively. LC is a learning site where adult learners are engaged in self-directed learning (SDL) activity. At the site, learners could learn TOEFL effectively and efficiently to achieve a better score. Two groups of students from tourism department and civil engineering department of State Polytechnic of Bali were involved in the research. The research participants were semester V students of the two departments. The former group consisted of twenty-two students and the latter consisted of twenty-six students. TOEFL, a standard testing device applied for measuring students' English competence, has been treating as a challenging device. A lot of students each year had been failing to achieve the passing grade conditioned by the institution prior to their graduation. Ten module sets of TOEFL consisting of ten listening, ten structure & written expression, and ten reading modules have been provided to support LC. The students were informed about the existence of LC and invited to join LC program for a number of meetings. In the future, joiners shall learn TOEFL individually at their preferred opportunity. However, the research participants were guided during the learning at LC as they had not gotten used to the program yet. Of thirty meetings provided, participants had joined fifteen times. The first test (T1) was given prior to their joining LC and last test (L2) was given at the end. During the learning, one staff was in charge to serve participant with the test, answer sheet, and to record their mark in their credit point card. The

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tests' result was then analyzed with a descriptive statistic to see how effective LC was to improve students' TOEFL score. As the result, students were able to improve their TOEFL scores. More obviously, the tourism department students were able to improve their scores more significantly than civil engineering students. In conclusion, self-directed learning with LC model is one of the prospective methods to improve students' TOEFL scores.

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1. Introduction

There are a lot of perceptions about self-directed learning (SDL). SDL is a strategy that can contribute to our understanding of learning by identifying an important form of adult learning and providing insight into the process of learning, challenging to define and debate the salient characteristic of adult learners and expanding the thinking about learning in a formal setting (Caffarella, 1993). It is considered as a process, a method, a personality characteristic, and a goal (Maggie-Sue & Duo, 2010). It is also stated to be learning with the aim of implementing information into one's life; academic, professional or personal (Altuger-Genc, 2013). Implementation of self-directed learning (SDL) has been proved to be effective for the adult learner of English in particular (Abdullah, at all., 2008). They claimed that SDL has been becoming an important aspect of adult lifelong learning as they have more control and authority of their own learning and are responsible for their all personal learning. The learning model could successfully promote students' self-confidence, initiative, perseverance and life satisfaction (Widanta, 2016).

There have been a number of researchers curiously undertaken to prove the effectiveness of SDL model. Altuger-Genc (2013) claimed that students, especially professional students, have to do SDL to improve their professionalism in their study at formal school. The model could stimulate them to continuously improve their knowledge and know-how. In his research, two components of learning were applied (instructor-directed learning/ IDL and self-directed learning/ SDL). Both strategies were utilized in the Statistical Quality Control course (MET409). IDL and SDL were designed and implemented mutually in the learning. The finding showed that SDL was triggering students' confidence, comfort and familiarity more than IDL. In line with this, Maggie Su and Duo (2010) measured the readiness of young adult learner of English as a foreign language (EFL), what learning strategy they mostly use to learn EFL, the relation between young adult EFL learners' SDL readiness and their learning strategy, and to see the most effective learning strategy category. 110 EFL major college students were invited to fill in the questionnaire. Descriptive statistic was used to analyze data. The result showed that students of EFL of the college had reached a medium to high level of SDL readiness, suggesting that they have been able to motivate and monitor their own learning process. They were found able to use the SDL strategy to acquire their target language.

The strategy was also utilized with the use of computer assistance. O'Donell (2006) reviewed the use of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) for learning English as a Second Language class in Korea. In addition, it was undertaken to recognize the current use of CALL to Korean EFL context through literature available and personal experience in an attempt to determine if CALL should be used in Korean. O'Donell (2006)'s investigation successfully found that applying CALL gave opportunity and also difficult due to the socio-cultural and educational environment. However, some innovative uses of CALL-related to EFL/ESL context could be applied potentially in Korea. Kanna and MacKnish (2000) furthermore suggested an online learning to be next alternative. They claimed that in order for a student to practice their skill and to expose themselves to the computer and provide themselves with peer and alternative learning environment, they have to engage in online learning. The learning strategy could reduce students' anxiety, especially when it is offered in

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the multimedia lab to aid students' visualization (Huang & Liu, 2000). This situation is triggering that learning TOEFL in LC shall also be innovatively renovated that students can learn it with CALL.

According to Gureckis and Markan (2012), SDL is very meaningful to implement as learners' experience is under their control. The model is beneficial to learners as it is a "flash card" study which enables learners to choose the timing and order of each studied item. In addition, it is also an active category learning, intervention- based learning, as well as active gathering of informal learning. In line with this, Loyens, Magda, and Rikers (2008) support the idea that SDL is necessary for learners as they can do a problem-based learning with it. SDL can give students a broader role in selecting, and evaluate materials. Ping Chuk (2004) agrees on that idea that autonomous learning (SDL) is an effective way of learning as it can develop students meta-cognitive awareness, learner awareness, subject matter awareness, as well as social awareness. SDL is closely related to self-regulated learning (SRL). These both can support and improve students' e-learning activity. SDL and SRL are developmental processes which promote the "self" aspect, and in its implementation can encompass SRL (Loyens, Magda and Rikers (2008), however, SDL is a concept of adult education and SRL focuses on educational physiology and cognitive psychology which is mostly studied in school environment (Saks and Laijen (2014). Basically, SDL is considered a broader construct encompassing SRL.

There have been a number of ideas and concept reviewed above. Most ideas proposed agreed that SDL is very useful and beneficial for adult learners. It triggers learners to experience things under their control (Guneckis & Markant, 2012). SDL is definitely required as it can develop students' awareness, such as metacognitive, social, subject matter awareness (Ping Chuk, 2004). Other idea stated that SDL shall be combined with problem-based learning (PBL) to make it successful and meaningful (Loyens, Magda, and Rikers, 2008). The more advanced ideas suggested that SDL shall be implemented with computer technology. Thus, it can be applied in CALL (O'Donell, 2006; Huang & Liu, 2000), and it is very applicable to online learning (Kanna & MacKnish, 2000). Most of those ideas are still normative and two of them can be motivating for future development. However, all of them have not given any specific input on how to implement the concepts, where they can be implemented, what type of English lesson are suitable for the concepts and so forth. None of them suggest implementing the SDL concept to learn any standardized test, including TOEFL, TOEIC, or IELTS. This is the reason why the researchers would like to try to develop TOEFL test booklet for practice. Thus, more specifically, the researchers wanted to develop learning center (LC) program for learning students of BSP to learn TOEFL.

2. Research Methods

As it was a developmental research, an object included in the research was the result of the development, i.e. TOEFL learning modules. In addition, the result of tests was also set as the research object. Two test results (T1 and T2) were analyzed to recognize model effectiveness. There were thirty modules produced to support the learning at LC. The modules were divided into three parts, Listening, Structure & Written Expression, and Reading. Each part has ten modules.

The subject of the research were two groups of a student at State Polytechnic of Bali. One group of twenty- two students is from Tour and Travel study program, Tourism Department and one group of twenty-six students from Construction Project study program, Civil Engineering Department.

Prior to the learning at LC, the research participants were informed about the existence of LC. There were also invited to be research participants and joined the LC program. The groups of student were chosen randomly. They were also informed about the function of LC, what they can do at LC, how to join LC. Learning at LC was then started up on the information sharing. The research participants were invited regularly. Each member of the group had joined LC program 15 times. This happened because of the situation that students still have classes during the period. As they are busy dealing with their regular class, some LC programs were conducted in their classroom. This was energized because they are about to have a final examination.

The pre-test was given prior to the learning execution. The test was undertaken by the researcher. One series of TOEFL book was used as a testing tool (T1 and T2) to measure participants' progress. The test result was used as a baseline to see how their skill of language would improve. Post-test was given at the end of the session. Both results of the test were analyzed with a descriptive statistic.

3. Results and Analysis

Analysis of test result was enhanced to see how the LC was. A number of aspects could show the result, such as minimum score, maximum score, the standard of deviation, mean, median, modus, variant, an average of increase, the percentage of the mean. The following table shows achievement of both groups.

No	Subject	Test 1	Test 2
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progress from T1 to T2 was 22,00. Progress percentage was 4,64. The group minimum score of T1 and T2 was 447,00 and 477,00 respectively. And their maximum score of T1 and T2 was 510,00 and 543,00 respectively. To sum up, the group of Civil Engineering department has a lower baseline the group of Tourism department. However, the technology group achieved better progress which is indicated by mean of progress achieved by each group.

The result of analysis above obviously displayed that overall students of Tourism Department have higher English competence than Civil Engineering group. It can be seen with a score of their T1 and T2. The condition results. In addition, their English learning hour has been more intensive than Civil Engineering students. However, their achievement during learning TOEFL at LC was considered a less sufficient being compared to the achievement of Civil Engineering students.

The Engineering group, even though, have lower English ability showed by their T1 result, could reveal higher mean of progress (33,65) while Tourism group achieved lower mean (22,00). It can be concluded that Engineering group got better success in doing SDL strategy at LC. This could result. This might be a good case to investigate for a further research topic. Civil Engineering students' daily learning strategy can be investigated to find out what makes them successful in learning English test. In addition, condition happened to students of Tourism department is also a challenging opportunity to research. This can be an interesting case to study in order to find out exact reasons why they performed such kind of performance. Both cases can be of importance to investigate so that some new learning strategies can be developed.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the results of the research could obviously reveal that SDL strategy implemented in LC program is successful and meaningful. The situation is shown by each research participant's progressing achievement. This program can hopefully be attracting students' willingness, perseverance and motivation to do self-directed learning not only at LC but also in their every single moment to help improve their professionalism.

Thus, we suggest that every academic and staff of the institution shall trigger students to make use the program of LC frequently to help improve their English competence. Further development in learning strategy should certainly be undertaken frequently so that English learning process at State Polytechnic of Bali can continuously be improved.

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Biography of Authors

	<p>I Made Rai Jaya Widanta is an English lecturer at Mechanical Engineering Dept., Bali State Polytechnic (BSP). Apart from the permanent employment, he does some English classes in some private universities and colleges in Denpasar. In addition, he also handles some classes of Indonesian language for foreigners in BSP. He was awarded Sarjana Sastra (SS) degree by Warmadewa University Denpasar in 1997 and Magister Humaniora (M.Hum.) by Udayana University in 2002. He joined a short course program and received a certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages (TESOL) in Phoenix Academy, Perth, Western Australia in 2006. During his tenure of work at BSP he has been assigned to a number of academic positions including the head of the language laboratory, head of English Test Center for TOEFL@ITP, head of Language and Culture Center (LCC), and secretary at Career Development Center (CDC). His research interests are first and second language acquisition, second language learning, developing learning models, second-language and interlanguage pragmatics. A number of research in those areas funded by Directorate General of Research, Technology, and Higher Education have been undertaken.</p>
	<p>A.A. Raka Sitawati is a senior lecturer at Administration Dept. Bali State Polytechnic. She finished her bachelor program in English literature and awarded bachelor degree (Dra) by Udayana University, and Magister Pendidikan (M.Pd) by Ganesha University of Education. He experience in teaching was abundant, especially that of teaching General English and English for Specific purposes. In addition, she has been active in doing a number of research both funded by Directorate General of Research, Technology and Higher Education and self-financed, such as second language acquisition, language learning, language assessment and developing learning models.</p>
	<p>I Nyoman Rajin Aryana is an English lecturer at Tourism Dept., Bali State Polytechnic. He completed his first degree in English education in Ganesha University of Education and his Magister Humaniora (M.Hum.) degree at Udayana University. Apart of being a permanent lecturer, he is assigned to a number of position, including coordinator of Darmasiswa program at BSP, advisor of student activities board. In addition, he is also active to be an event organizer and a senior judge for both Local and National English Debating Championship. Recently, he does some Indonesian classes for foreigners both in DSP and in some hotels.</p>
	<p>I Wayan Dana Ardika is an English lecturer at Civil Engineering Dept., Bali State Polytechnic. He pursued his first degree of Sarjana Sastra (SS) in Warmadewa University. He continued for the master program and pursued his Magister Pendidikan (M.Pd) at Ganesha University of Education. Currently, he is in charge as head of Language Laboratory Unit at BSP. In addition, he also does some English classes outside BSP, such as university, nursing, and midwife academy. His research interest is both language learning, language assessment, and developing IT-based English learning model.</p>

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