

Self-Directed Learning:

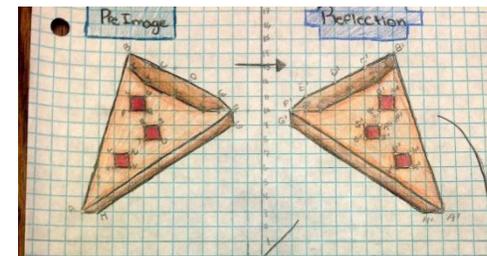
Helping learners do more outside the class

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Self-Directed learning in action

- Think of a time you attempted to learn something new, addressed a life problem or took on a personal challenge?
- What resources did you use? How did you measure your success? How do you know you made progress?
- If you sought out, planned and evaluated your learning, chances are that you have already engaged in self-directed learning.





Self-directed learning defined



► **Most well-known Definition:** *“a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies and evaluations learning outcomes”* (Knowles, 1975, p. 18).

Self-directed learning

- While the name “self-directed learning” may seem self-explanatory, there is no single accepted definition.
- Some view it as autonomous learning (process) while others see it as a personal trait (attribute) such as self-regulation or self-efficacy.

The major tenet of SDL is that the **learner takes control of his or her own learning**. There is a continuum on how this is done.

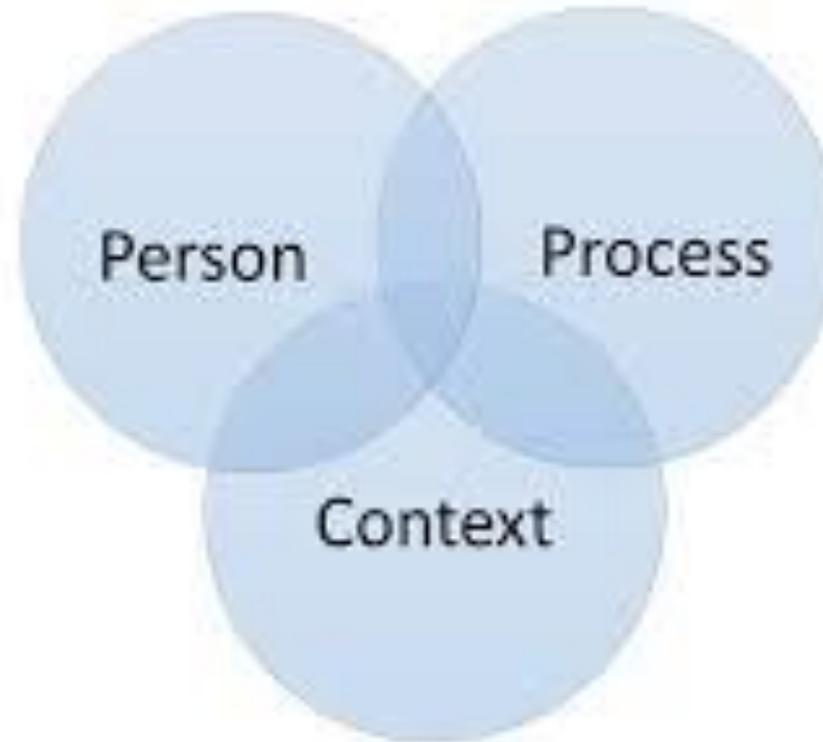


Self-direction in language learning

- How many of you learned an new language simply by going to class?



Self-directed learning: Person, Process Context



Hiemstra & Brockett (2012)



Self-directed learning: Person, Process Context

- ▶ The element of **person** includes the characteristics of the individual such as their life experience, prior education, motivation, etc.
- ▶ The element of **process** includes the teaching-learning transaction, planning, organizational and technological skills, etc.
- ▶ The element of **context** includes the culture, power dynamics, learning environment, finances, gender, etc.
- ▶ The PPC model posits that “the optimal situation for self-directed learning to be most effective is when the person, process and context are in balance” (Heimstra & Brockett, 2012, p. 159).



Self-directed learning: Person, Process and Context model

- ▶ According to the model, one area affects the balance of another.
- ▶ If a student feels invisible in class or isolated from the larger community, their motivation to engage in that context would diminish. This affects the element of person (motivation) which decreases.
- ▶ If the element of context affects the element of person in a negative way, we need to improve the element of process to bring balance and increase the effectiveness of students' self-directing their learning.

One way to do this is increase your use of technology in your language learning. How do you use technology in your learning?

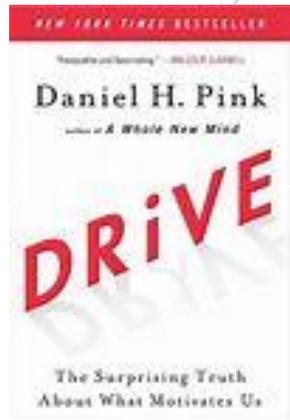
Emotions and learning (person)

Boud, Keogh, & Walker (1996) state that person's experience influences learning, and that the context of learning and the learner's emotions (positive or negative) to the experience shape the outcome: **negative feelings act as a block to learning**. If this is the case the educator must help the learner overcome these feelings (process & context).

As motivation is born from the learner's emotions, Horwitz et al (1986) found, and any negative emotion, such as anxiety, serves as a block to learning.



Facilitating Motivation



- ▶ Daniel Pink talks about how to keep 21st Century workers motivated.
- ▶ According to Pink, the “carrot and stick” approach of the last century only worked in tasks that did not require a lot of planning such as working faster on the assembly line.
- ▶ In order to motivate worker who use critical thinking in their positions, employers three tenets must be met:
 - ▶ **Autonomy**: the desire to direct our own lives.
 - ▶ **Mastery**: the desire to get better.
 - ▶ **Purpose**: desire to do something to be part of something bigger.





Pink and Motivation: Autonomy

- **Autonomy:** Merriam & Bierema (2014) cite Pink's work in motivation calling Autonomy self-direction in learning. to engage in self-directed learning by first setting learning goals with the language in terms of what they wish to accomplish.
- English Language students need to engage in self-directed learning by first setting learning goals with the language in terms of what they wish to accomplish. Students take responsibility for their learning. This can be fostered by classroom challenges.
- **What kind of goals (if any) do you set in your language learning?**

Pink and Motivation: Mastery

► **Mastery:** In *Moonwalking with Einstein*, Joshua Foer (2011) states (citing the work of Fitts & Posner) that there are three stages of acquiring a new skill:

1. cognitive stage: intellectualizing and figuring out how to perform new skill,
2. associative stage: making less mistakes but still working on performance,
3. autonomous stage where the learner no longer thinks about how to improve and goes on autopilot. You feel you are good enough and extra effort is not necessary.

Example: How good are you at typing?

:





Pink and Motivation: Mastery

► Foer stated that those who seek mastery in an area do not allow themselves to enter the autonomous stage of learning.

► He found that they constantly sought to:

A. focus on their technique

B. stay goal oriented and

C. get constant and immediate feedback on their performance.

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Pink and Motivation: Mastery

- ▶ Foer claims the autonomous stage is the *OK plateau* because the learner is satisfied with his or her performance and does not feel the need to continue making the effort to improve.
- ▶ They do not enter the “*OK plateau*” because they perceive their mastery is not yet good enough.
- ▶ **How do you not fall onto the OK plateau?**

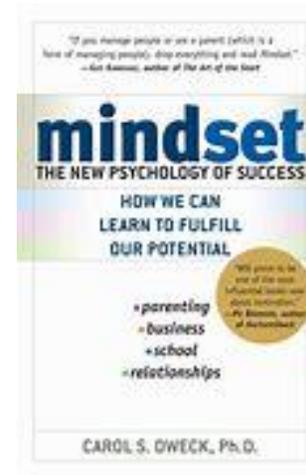
Pink and Motivation: Purpose

- **Purpose:** Bonnie Norton (2013) speaks of learners wanting affiliation in the group that uses the language: in other words the degree to which learners feel engagement (investment) in an imagined community affects the speed of their learning.
- **Do you feel that by speaking English you are part of a new community?**



Carol Dweck and Mindset

- ▶ There are two types of mindsets when it comes to learning:
- ▶ the **fixed** mindset and
- ▶ the **growth** mindset





Fixed Mindset

- ▶ fixed mindset view intelligence as a finite gift: Either one has it or does not.
- ▶ Individuals who have a fixed mindset view intelligence as finite and something we are born with.
- ▶ Born from being praised for talent or intelligence.
- ▶ Therefore, when they encounter a problem they cannot solve, they feel their intelligence is not enough and give up.



Fixed Mindset

- ▶ Also fear failure and withdraw because they feel they do not have it in them to succeed.
- ▶ When people holding this mindset encounter difficulty, they shift the blame to something else or themselves.
- ▶ Dweck states: the “fixed mindset creates an internal monologue that is focused on judging.”
- ▶ Statements such as “**I can’t learn (English) because the pronunciation/grammar is hard.**”



Growth Mindset

- ▶ Individuals with a growth mindset views intelligence as infinite and learning as effort.
- ▶ The growth mindset individual views failure as a challenge that needs to be overcome.
- ▶ Born from being praised for hard work and effort.
- ▶ Dweck reported that individuals holding this mindset were able to persevere and attain greater success.

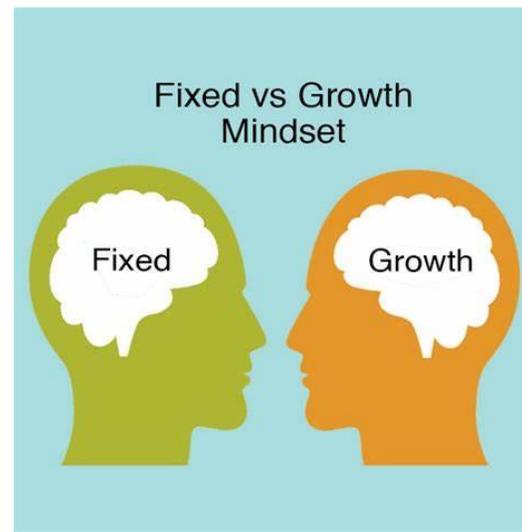


Growth Mindset

- ▶ People with this mindset view an obstacle as needing to be confronted and develop strategies to get to their goal.
- ▶ Dweck states that individuals with a growth mindset are not judging but rather looking at how the information can be applied to learning.
- ▶ In language learning Brown likened this has been to ambiguity tolerance, or the ability to take views that are contrary to our belief system.
- ▶ If learners can suspend their internal dialogs of judgment, especially when it comes to culture, and become more tolerant of the differences, they will be more open to the language as well.

Fixed vs Growth mindset

- **Which learner are you and why?**
- What steps can you take to (continue and) develop your growth mindset in yourself and your students?
- We can find ourselves on a continuum or have more of a fixed mindset in some areas while exhibiting more of a growth mindset in others.





Looking to Polyglots on YouTube

► Another way we can help is to **coach** our students on how to self-direct their learning.

► Lýdia Machová of www.language mentoring.com outlines **5 ways** to do so:

1. Don't wait to be taught: Start learning on your own.
2. You must enjoy learning the language. Find something that is fun to do.
3. You need to put the effort in. There is no magic pill to take.
4. You need a lot of contact with the language. This means you will need to work at it almost every day.
5. You need to see what works for you and build a system. What works for you may be different for another person.

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Setting goals

- Lýdia also suggests setting short, 2 month priorities.

An example would be for two months spending more time on listening and grammar and less time on writing, reading and speaking:

1. Think of what you think you need/want to work on.
2. Choose two areas and write them down.
3. List concrete steps that they will take to accomplish this.
4. Keep reflective journals that you collect and offer feedback: **This we will have you do in class**





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