

Debaters perspective toward the use of Autonomous Learning

Gigih Widy Merbawani

gigih20027@mhs.unesa.ac.id

Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Surabaya, Indonesia

Abstract. Research on the debatable topic of learning autonomy from the perspectives of the debaters is not relatively new. However, further discussion is done by seeking the educational implications of autonomous learning. Therefore, this study investigates the cases of three active debaters under the learning community in students' activity at the University. The findings have focused more on how they subjectively position themselves during the learning process of becoming a good debater in the debating community. First, they agree that the existence of mentors has created a significant difference in the growth and betterment of debaters in the learning community. Second, assessment has a considerable role in becoming the extrinsic exposure, the evaluative measurement, and raising learning motivation. Third, during the learning process of becoming a good debater, autonomy can be seen as either individualistic or not, depending on each individual to position and the urge to learn.

Keywords: debater, learner autonomy

1. INTRODUCTION

As language learners, pay attention to the use of every skill; one skill that plays a big part in each language learner is speaking. Furthermore, speaking skills are considered one of the complex skills to master. Many language learners think the existence of spoken skills is seen as to be challenging to master (Leong, 2017). Moreover, as a language learner, the best existence of a language is to communicate. The main goal of learning speaking skills is to communicate effectively. In other words, it is essential for language learners to make themselves understand by using their proficiency (Bahrani & Soltani, 2007). Schools have a big part in introducing a language as a formal institution even though further discussion believes that language learners need to create their surroundings to learn the language.

Language learners have the freedom to choose the learning society they want in terms of practicing theoretical knowledge. Creating a learning society has a related meaning to be a focus on each the personal growth that might be possible (Stiglitz & Greenwald, 2014). It can be seen from the existence of a learning society that will help language learners to grow

better; it can also impact each personal improvement as they are surrounded by the people that help them achieve their goals.

A learning society is considered the best learning environment for language learners. Moreover, the language learners themselves are responsible for engaging with the surroundings to help them be better. The elaborative definition of learning society can reflect on the autonomous learning each person has during the learning process inside the society. Learner autonomy is further defined in various terms, including 'learner independence,' 'self-direction,' and 'independent learning'(Masouleh & Jooneghani, 2012). The action learners take to create the best learning method for betterment can have a rooted correlation with learning society.

Further discussion in this paper has focused on language learners' ability to create good self-discipline and management in the Debate community. The beginning step for the language learner to create their learning autonomy is by getting effective strategies that preserve individual learning and a further willingness to change and improve to be better(Godwin-Jones, 2011). Autonomous learning and effective self-regulatory strategies are essential in foreign language learning; without these, students might have problems enhancing learning opportunities outside the language classroom(Kormos & Csizér, 2014). Furthermore, students can find a learning society on their own to help them grow in betterment.

Some language learners choose a learning community based on their interests. One example of a learning community for language learners is debate. In debate, language learners are required to master public speaking and critical thinking. Debate uses speaking as the primary tool, while speaking helps debaters to support their social skills(Saputra & Ive Emaliana, 2016). For some debaters who are also language learners, it is sometimes hard to develop critical thinking and find good phrases to deliver it. Moreover, in the debate world, learning society has taken a huge role in creating students' improvement.

Based on Hollec (1981), learners' autonomy is traditionally defined as the ability to take control over one's learning. The use of learning autonomy terms has led to its similar definition to self-regulation. Moreover, the existence of self-regulation theory has a smaller scope rather than learning autonomy. Self-regulation has the sense of controlling and retails one's cognitive, motivation, emotional, and behavior(Kormos & Csizér, 2014). At the same time, autonomous learning has a more extensive scope of study that includes learners surrounding in terms of helping to grow. Autonomous learning is also responsible for managing learning and the contextual social environment(Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2019). Even though its definition might come for almost similarity, however, its scope of the study is different.

This study focuses on the availability of learning autonomy in debaters. The work of debate itself includes students' critical thinking and idea structure towards a specific motion or topic. Many teachers of other languages adapt debate as tool to enlarge student knowledge.

Simply adaptive style of debating and how it leads to student-centered as well as triggering students' critical thinking has significantly changed students' public speaking ability and argumentation that address complex issues (Burek & Losos, 2014). The presence of the debaters learning community and its way of learning debate has led to researchers' curiosity and the complexity of autonomous learning used.

Moreover, this study aimed to investigate autonomous learning from the perspective of debaters. This study also points out to create significant research related to the complex and debatable topic of autonomous learning; do autonomous learning need teachers?, do assessments have a role in autonomous learning?, and is autonomous learning individualistic? These three centers of autonomous learning uncertainty are being tested towards debaters in the debaters learning community.

2. METHOD

This paper reports on a qualitative study examining the learning autonomy of three active university students under the students' activities organization -Jennifer, Gina, and Rosi- (all names are pseudonyms) during their active participation in the debaters learning community at one of the State University in Malang, East Java, Indonesia. In order to gain the data, the researcher did 45-60 minutes of the interview with each participant. Each respondent had experienced debate for more than 6 years (starting from when they were in Junior High School) and has joined more than 20 competitions during their journey of debating. At the time this research was conducted, they have become active debater under the Organization for more than 2 years. During their time of learning in these students' activities organization, they get much knowledge related to the structure of a good argument development as well as considerable knowledge of the whole debatable aspect of the motion (i.e., philosophy, economy, politics, international relation, war, terrorism, and more). The participants have joined most of the weekly practice and have been developing their ability in debating in many aspects. The participants were interviewed and given open-ended questions about their learning autonomy and experience in enhancing their knowledge. The interview has pointed out more perspectives on the debatable topic of learning autonomy.

3. RESULTS

The data analysis pointed to the interpretation that Jennifer, Rosi, and Gina subjectively position themselves during the learning process of becoming a good debaters in the Debating Community. The analysis has also discussed three debatable topics; Do autonomous learning need teachers, Do assessments have a role in autonomous learning and Is autonomy individualistic? These questions were explored in the area of a debater and its learning autonomy. Each of these findings will be explained in this section.

1) Autonomous Learning and teachers

"from the insight of a debater, I think coach or mentor does help me so much in introducing the "learning to learn" method. For example, my mentor gave me this material so my job is to create a further discussion towards that article, create a summary, make a report or have to explain it in front of everyone, like how to deliver the idea well, in that case, my mentor has helped me so much." (Jennifer interview 1 26/12/2020)

From the interview, Jennifer has explained that the existence of coaches in terms of their learning autonomy has a significant role. She explained other activities her coach had introduced to her. Much of the activities her coach has developed before the previous debate mastery has led to a better understanding of beneficial ways to keep them learning and enlarging their knowledge.

"because to be honest, even my reading sources is given by my mentor, they willing to share what's the hot topic nowadays and even started to have a small discussion about what's the possible scenario of it" (Jennifer interview 1 26/12/2020)

Moreover, she also explained that her mentor's act is much further than it looks. The term "learning to learn" her coach introduced has led to the discussion on how to deliver the argument and the construction of the argument itself. Furthermore, the role of the coach has created a particular situation of learning the matter in the debate. Starting with giving important material on nowadays issues, a mentor in the debate also tries to encourage the debater to develop further reading abilities.

"it needs a guide, it needs a teacher, it needs a coach because I have never seen a debater in my life that does everything on their own other than enlarging their reading. that's almost impossible to do because the debate itself almost consists of 2 people and always consists of structure-related such as defining part, defining arguments, or something like that. By the structure itself, you always need someone that can guide you through the whole motion, because it is almost impossible to master every debate scope by yourself. For each topic, they always consist of any other aspects from philosophy to economy, politics, international relation. war, terrorism. it is almost impossible for just one person to master them all. that's why the existence of others could help you so much, not only in terms of knowledge about motion but also another point of view." (Gina interview 1 26/12/2020)

Gina, one of the debate community's active debaters, has a positive perspective on behalf of mentors' existence. She not only explains the further discussion of mentors that help her grow, but she also talks about the work of each teammate in the debate. Revering on how big the scope of material debaters needs to acknowledge during the practice, she pointed out that it is almost impossible for anyone to cover many works explanation. In debates, she

explains that the existence of others has a role in sharing a significant point of view and focuses more on comparing each difference.

2) Assessment and Autonomous learning

"Yes, assessment terms are very helpful for debater, most of the assessment for my betterment came from my mentor, my teammates, or debate peers. so for example, I have a debatable topic that I need to discuss with my peers, I would rather come to the person that I think capable of this topic, we discussed it together. I gave my point of view, she/he will assess me. How far I have understood the topic. so yeah, it is very beneficial." (Jennifer interview 1 26/12/2020)

In the interview, Jennifer focuses on the existence of peers to help her enlarge her knowledge. She showed an advanced example at the time when debaters needed to elaborate on their topic. The focus of elaborating on the topic itself led her to ask for somebody else opinion. She needs to share her idea with others in order to create a better understanding of the motion or topic. In other words, another point of view is critical in the debate community.

"It needs assessment, like almost every time. How do you know you do not mess up, that you improve your speech, your idea in general, and many more. for each practice, you need an assessment. It can be from anyone, anybody, teammates, mentors, teachers, it doesn't matter who he is, you just need a particular person to listen to your argument and giving verbal feedback on what you can improve or what you have better at as a debater we still need to keep tracking on what we've lack of and create a strategy to make it better." (Gina interview 1 26/12/2020)

Moreover, Gina shared her point of view towards assessment in the debate world related to learners' autonomy. She focuses more on the debater's performance in delivering the idea. Such an assessment is needed almost in every single thing debaters do. In the debate competition itself, many aspects are scored. Not only debaters' ability to elaborate on the idea but also how they deliver it. The manner of delivering the idea, for example, sentence structure or even word choice, during their speech. Besides that, the method is also essential, the ideal structure of the idea. Both Gina and Rosi also mention about META(Most Effective Tactic Available) that debaters need to pay attention to each different competition.

"You have an environment and a circle that will help you growing in time, so this is what I learned from the debating community. They are willing to share everything, they willing to talk with you about everything. There's no seniority or juniority. It's always about growing up together and that's actually has a correlation to when you already have a motivation to grow or be the better version of yourself, you'll need someone to help you continue doing it." (Rosi interview 1 26/12/2020)

From Rosi's point of view, he sees assessment in debates more as the existence of motivation. The learning community that has helped him grow in material development has also influenced a significant difference to become better. The willingness to grow together and share each other ideas has opened up his mind about the existence of a learning community. The sense of "we are in the same boat" has erased each debater's individual status and created a new phenomenon of growing together for betterment.

3) Individualistic behavior among debaters

"Autonomous learning is not individualistic in terms of the debate. The existence of mentors or experts is the main reason it can't be called individualistic. In a learning community debaters shares idea, thought and belief between each other, right? in that way, when experts give us the feedback, that is our main resources to become better." (Jennifer interview 1 26/12/2020)

In the interview, Jennifer explains that debaters' autonomous learning cannot be called individualistic. The existence of a mentor has become a huge icon of why it can be considered not individualistic. As the mentor has a role to help the learners grow and develop their way in the debate, learners rely much on them. Moreover, the contradictory arguments are given by Gina.

"Yes, it is individualistic because it depends on you, No matter what your coach says, what your teammates say, by the end, it is still you who will stand on the podium delivering your speech. You need to elaborate on your own idea. Every single logic that you bought is all yours. It is also very subjective where it depends on the debater itself to choose what they want to learn. That's why in debate competition by having one particular motion, debaters remain to give their own idea, their own knowledge or thought. That just represents how individualistic a debater is." (Gina interview 1 26/12/2020)

In her perspective, debaters can be considered individualistic in many ways. Not only in terms of how debaters needed to perform by themselves during the debate, but debaters also need to create their own opinion towards the motion. She explained that the existence of teammates does not play a significant role in concept in debates.

"Okay, so, you are learning in a huge circle that will help you grow right? So the people, the community, will help you so much but you need to understand also what's your biggest problem, but you need to decide on your own, and you need to focus on that. I think in my case it becomes more individual rather than community development." (Rosi interview 1 26/12/2020)

Rosi gives a further explanation. He underlined both individualistic and non-individualistic terms of autonomous learning for debaters. He focuses not only on explaining the community where debaters grow but also on recognizing each debater's

individual is also essential. Each of them has a problem that prevents them from growing better, and anyhow other debaters or even mentors cannot help them figure out how to overcome that problem. He also pointed out that to be able to get into society is taking advantage of resources and feedback from others and being responsible for their own growth.

As the findings of the result have been divided into three sections, the discussion will also focus on three debatable topics related to autonomous learning on debaters. First, 'do autonomous learning need teachers,' has a huge point of view from debaters that the work has a complete correlation with a teacher. The debate activity significantly develops communication, teamwork, and critical thinking skills (Aclan & Abd Aziz, 2015). The existence of others in the debate has built up learners' inner motivation and encouragement in terms of betterment.

Moreover, the subjects also stated that mentors or coaches have a role in giving an introduction theory on learning a language structure or even the practical knowledge on doing the debate properly. The term learning to learn that being introduced by the mentors has led to a better self-regulation strategy for learners. The use of debate to deliver the instructional content has created a positive change in learning motivation, cognitive activity, and self-esteem (Korniienko, 2020). Furthermore, debaters get help from other debaters fellow to be better. Not only sharing ideas and correcting each other points of view on a specific topic, but teammates can also become an external motivator to grow together.

Second, the three subjects have shared their point of view on the second debatable question of autonomous learning 'do assessment have a role in autonomous learning? Three of them also have a positive perception where they believe the assessment created a big difference in their learning. Related to the assessment, it has long been recognized that a single most influential factor in shaping what and how students in choose to learn and the quality of learning outcomes depends on the quality of assessment (Doody & Condon, 2012). Therefore the three debaters explained that assessment does matter in the debate. They also share that the use of assessment is much further than becoming the evaluative measurement. After debaters get their assessment, they get triggered to be better. In some words, using assessment can help learners have extrinsic exposure and learning motivation.

Lastly, related to the question 'is autonomous learning individualistic'? Three of the interviewees share their different answers. Correlating their environment, each individual has actions toward the society or circle they enter (Hamamura, 2012). This theory could best represent interviewees' answers to the last debatable questions. In a debate, each personal autonomous learning is different. Therefore it can be considered either individualistic or not. In a competition, debaters are demanded to work as a teammate, share and create an idea together and work as one.

Moreover, autonomous learning can also be considered individualistic as they are responsible for enlarging knowledge. Furthermore, learning autonomy can be considered individualistic because each individual needs to have self-recognition and management of their overcoming problems. So it somehow depends on each debater to see whether their learning autonomy is considered individualistic or not.

IMPLICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE LEARNERS

The implication of this research could be more focused on language learners. Language learners can implement the result of this study for their betterment in learning a language. First, teachers have a significant role in students' improvement by providing material to learn and introducing a learning strategy for mastering the material. At some point, the first implication can also be considered by the teacher to use in class. A lot more than it looks, a teacher's job can include further action to become a decision-maker, facilitator, and also resource person for students (Lo, 2010). By having cooperative learning along with students, the result of the study plan can achieve its maximum capacity.

Second, in using assessment, students and teachers can create a practical assessment term for a more significant educational achievement. Findings on this topic that can be considered impactful in teaching-learning activity are; 1) becoming the most significant extrinsic exposure, 2) becoming the evaluative measurement, and 3) rising learning motivation. Although contradictory, the use of assessment for students could create students' dependence on expert feedback (Hay & Mathers, n.d.). Moreover, the use of assessment is considered to be important for language learners.

Lastly, language learners can have their own individualistic learning related to learner autonomy, as can be seen from the findings that learners have to be responsible for enlarging their knowledge. Furthermore, the presence of each individual in the learning society has created a significant role to have a sensitivity toward their improvement inside the learning circle. Individuals who interact with bigger membership or collectivistic members have a bigger sense of individuality recognition to define themselves (Bechtoldt et al., 2012). In other words, self-recognition and other external exposure have a significant role in each individual's betterment.

4. CONCLUSION

This study generated significant insight into the three Debaters who actively participate in the learning community of debate. Over their learning experience in enhancing the related knowledge about the debate, the three debaters have shared their points of view on debaters' autonomous learning focuses on three debatable topics; does autonomous learning need teachers, does assessment have a role in autonomous learning, and is autonomy individualistic. These questions are being explored in the area of a debater and its learning

autonomy. How do they subjectively position themselves during the learning process of becoming a good debater in the debating community? First, they agree that the existence of mentors has created a significant difference in the growth and betterment of debaters in the learning community. Second, assessment has a considerable role in becoming the extrinsic exposure, the evaluative measurement, and raising learning motivation. Third, during the learning process of becoming a good debater, autonomy can be seen as either individualistic or not, depending on each individual to position and the urge to learn.

This study suggests that the debater use their knowledge and ability to keep participating in the debate in any form. To bring up innovation of creating a learning community in a society with a mission to create a social service can be one big step that will change anything. Debaters' learning autonomy and discipline show that the growth of further experience inside debaters is possible. Moreover, for the next researcher, it is suggested to bring this research into an advanced discussion about the other topic related to debate(i.e., idea development towards motion). Any other research on a relatable topic is opened in order for this field research betterment.

References

- Aclan, E. M., & Abd Aziz, N. H. (2015). Exploring parliamentary debate as a pedagogical tool to develop English communication skills in EFL/ESL classrooms. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 4(2), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.4n.2p.1>
- Bahrani, T., & Soltani, R. (2007). How to teach speaking. *Longman*, 3(2), 25–30.
- Bechtoldt, M. N., Choi, H. S., & Nijstad, B. A. (2012). Individuals in mind, mates by heart: Individualistic self-construal and collective value orientation as predictors of group creativity. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 48(4), 838–844. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2012.02.014>
- Borg, S., & Alshumaimeri, Y. (2019). Language learner autonomy in a tertiary context: Teachers' beliefs and practices. *Language Teaching Research*, 23(1), 9–38. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168817725759>
- Burek, D., & Losos, C. (2014). Debate: Where Speaking and Listening Come First. *Voices from the Middle*, 22(1), 49–57. <http://proxy.libraries.smu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eue&AN=98168304&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Doody, O., & Condon, M. (2012). Increasing student involvement and learning through using debate as an assessment. *Nurse Education in Practice*, 12(4), 232–237. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nepr.2012.03.002>
- Godwin-Jones, R. (2011). EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES AUTONOMOUS LANGUAGE LEARNING. *Language Learning & Technology*, 15(4), 4–11. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1525-1438.1994.04040283.x>
- Hamamura, T. (2012). Are cultures becoming individualistic? a cross-temporal comparison of individualism-collectivism in the united states and Japan. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 16(1), 3–24. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868311411587>
- Hay, M., & Mathers, L. (n.d.). HAY & MATHERS : DESIGNING ASSESSMENT FOR AUTONOMOUS LEARNING *Designing assessment for autonomous learning Abstract This paper aims to disseminate and evaluate an autonomous learning framework developed Introduction Autonomous learning is understood in a variety of ways . The definition of autonomous.*
- Kormos, J., & Csizér, K. (2014). The Interaction of Motivation, Self-Regulatory Strategies, and Autonomous Learning Behavior in Different Learner Groups. *TESOL Quarterly*, 48(2), 275–299. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.129>

- Korniienko, A. Y. (2020). The use of debates as an approach to deliver the course entitled “the impact of us policy on integration processes in europe in the post-bipolar era.” *International Journal of Higher Education*, 9(2), 321–329.
<https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v9n2p321>
- Leong, L. M. (2017). An Analysis of Factors Influencing Learners’ English Speaking Skill. *International Journal of Research in English Education*, 34–41.
- Lo, Y. F. (2010). Implementing reflective portfolios for promoting autonomous learning among EFL college students in Taiwan. *Language Teaching Research*, 14(1), 77–95.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168809346509>
- Masouleh, N. S., & Jooneghani, R. B. (2012). Autonomous learning: A teacher-less learning! *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 55, 835–842.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.09.570>
- Saputra, F., & Ive Emaliana. (2016). Jambi-English Language Teaching Journal. *Jambi-English Language Teaching*, 1(2), 56–64.
- Stiglitz, J. E., & Greenwald, B. C. (2014). *Creating a learning society: A new approach to growth, development, and social progress*. Columbia University Press.

Appendix

Appendix A. Coding table

Open codes	Axial codes	Finding statement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce 'learning to learn strategy • Act as sources of practical and theoretical knowledge • Give feedback on META(Most Affective Tactic Available) • Supportive learning community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do Autonomous Learning need teachers 	<p>The three debaters subjectively stated in terms of debates, debaters are learning with the help of a mentor and growing up seeking betterment with the help of people from the learning community.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Becoming the biggest extrinsic exposure • Becoming the evaluative measurement • Raising up learning motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do assessment have a role in Autonomous learning 	<p>The three debaters subjectively stated in terms of debates during the learning process of becoming a good debater, assessment has a huge role to become the extrinsic exposure, the evaluative measurement, as well as raising up learning motivation</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seems not individualistic as debate works in terms of teammates • Seems individualistic as debater demand to enrich knowledge their own • Self-realization and management of overcoming problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is Autonomy Individualistic 	<p>The three debaters subjectively stated in terms of debates during the learning process of becoming a good debater, autonomy can be seen either individualistic or not depends on each individual to positioned the urge of learning.</p>