

Developing Learner Autonomy Using the Mobile App *Edmodo* - An Evaluative Study

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Learner Autonomy is the ability to take charge of one's own learning. This ability is acquired rather than inborn. Developing learner autonomy has an important role in the theory and practice of language teaching. Language learning is a lifelong endeavour, not one that begins and ends in a language classroom. Learners have to work within and beyond the classroom to develop their language skills. The notion of learner autonomy moves into an area where learners can direct their own learning. It could mean those learning activities which take place without the immediate intervention of the teacher (Najeeb 2015).

Learner-centredness and Autonomy are rooted in Humanism and Experiential Psychology. In experiential learning, students are placed at the centre of the learning process, and their immediate personal experiences are taken as the point of departure for the learning process. Humanistic Psychology attempts to make sense of experience at the point where sociology and psychology intersect. Learner Autonomy allows the learners to plan their own learning activities, monitor their progress, and evaluate their outcomes (Nunan 194).

Personal computers or laptops help the students learn in a non-classroom environment when they are at home, in front of their personal computers online or offline. Mobile phones or m-learning platforms provide the students with the opportunity to learn when they are in the bus, at home, or at work doing their part-time jobs (Miangah and Nezarat 310). Using mobile technology, they can learn any time anywhere.

Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) deals with the use of mobile technology in language learning. In contrast to classroom learning, in MALL there is no need for the learners to sit in a classroom or at a computer to get language learning materials. MALL can be considered an ideal solution to language learning barriers in terms of time and place (310). It can be used effectively to develop the language skills of the school and college students.

Mobile assisted language learning (MALL) is a subarea of the growing field of mobile learning (mLearning) research which increasingly attracts the attention of scholars. This study provides a

systematic review of MALL research within the specific area of second language acquisition during the period 2007-2012 in terms of research approaches, methods, theories and models, as well as results in the form of linguistic knowledge and skills (Viberg & Gronlund 2012).

Various researches show that studies of mobile technology use in different aspects of language learning support the hypothesis that mobile technology can enhance learners' second language acquisition. However, most of the reviewed studies are experimental, small-scale, and conducted within a short period of time.

There is also a lack of cumulative research; most theories and concepts are used only in one or a few papers. This raises the issue of the reliability of findings over time, across changing technologies, and in terms of scalability. In terms of gained linguistic knowledge and skills, attention is primarily on learners' vocabulary acquisition, listening and speaking skills, and language acquisition in more general terms (Viberg & Gronlund 2012).

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to find whether the Mobile App *Edmodo* based Online Spoken English course helps in developing Learner Autonomy in college students at undergraduate level.

Hypothesis of the Study

- Speaking skills of the undergraduate students can be developed using *Edge On* Online Spoken English course.
- Learner Autonomy can be promoted in the undergraduate students using Mobile apps like *Edmodo*.

Location of the Study

The location of the study is Chevalier T. Thomas Elizabeth College for Women which is situated at Sembium in Chennai.

Samples for the Study

The undergraduate students of Chevalier T. Thomas Elizabeth College for Women are the samples of the study. The samples belonged to various departments like B.A. (English), B.Sc. (Maths), B.Sc. (Physics), B.Sc. (Computer Science), BBA, BCA, B.Com. (Corporate Secretaryship) 'A', B.Com. (Corporate Secretaryship) 'B', B.Com. (General) 'A', B.Com. (General) 'B', B.Com. (A&F), B.Sc. (Chemistry), and B.Sc. (Psychology).

Methodology

Edge On Online Spoken English Course introduced by the Postgraduate and Research Department of English, CTTE College for Women, Chennai, is designed based on the Outcome Based Education (OBE) Bloom's Taxonomy model. It is designed using the Learning Management System (LMS) Edmodo.

Edge On Online Spoken English Course is a 10-week course. It contains 10 Modules with 6 Units each. Each unit is designed based on the 6 levels in Bloom's Taxonomy (Remember, Understand, Apply, Analyse, Evaluate, and Create) (Parveen 2018).

5 levels in each unit contain listening exercises with multiple-choice questions which are automatically evaluated by the Learning Management System (LMS) *Edmodo*. These online quizzes are a part of the Formative Assessment done through the LMS. Students send their recorded responses for speaking tasks through *WhatsApp* to their respective General English teachers. The teachers evaluate the responses using a speaking rubric.

All the I year undergraduate students in the college are allowed to enroll and complete *Edge On* online Spoken English course during their course of study. Exit polls and survey questionnaires are used to collect and analyse student feedback.

Major Findings

- Out of 771 first year undergraduate students of CTTE College for Women, Chennai, 623 of them enrolled for *Edge On* Online Spoken English course.
- (i.e.) 81% of first year students have registered for the certification program.
- Out of 623 students who have registered for the course, 455 students have completed all the listening activities using *Edmodo* student app.
- (i.e.) 73% of the students who have registered for the course have completed all the listening activities using *Edmodo* student app.
- Out of 623 students who have registered for the course, 134 students have completed the speaking activities using *WhatsApp* voice recording facility.
- (i.e.) 22% of the students who have registered for the course have completed the speaking activities using *WhatsApp* voice recording facility.

The results indicate that most of the first-year undergraduate students are interested in learning language online. They show more interest in listening to audio and video through *Edmodo* app, rather than recording and sending their speaking responses through *WhatsApp*.

141 of them completed the course before the deadline with high credit scores and received Special Certificates. 142 of them completed the course after the deadline and received Course Completion Certificates.

The researcher used *Survey Monkey* questionnaire to get quantitative feedback on *Edge On* Online Spoken English course from the students of CTTE. Oral feedback was collected from the students to evaluate the qualitative feedback on the Online Spoken English course. These were done by the researcher to find out whether the students like / hate using mobile technology to learn or practise Spoken English, outside the classroom.

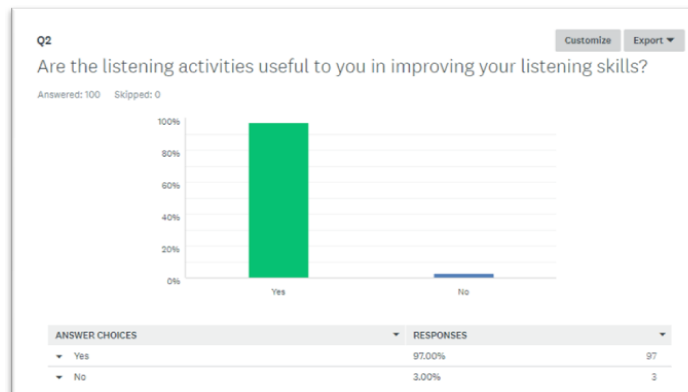
Students' Quantitative Feedback in *Survey Monkey*

Q1 How do you evaluate yourself, in general?



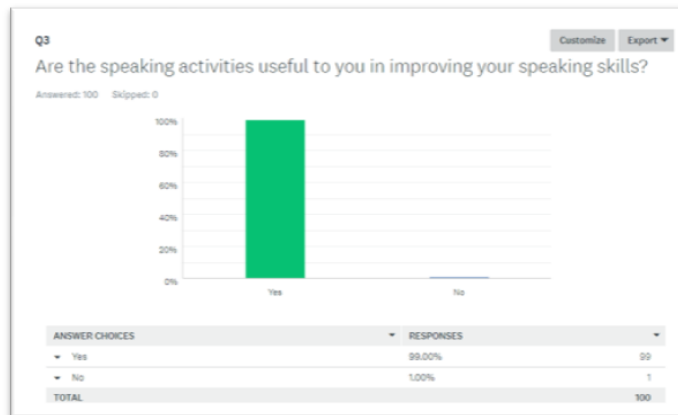
- 23% of the survey participants consider themselves as advanced learners.
- 9% of the survey participants consider themselves as slow learners.
- 58% of the survey participants consider themselves as self-motivated.
- 2% of the survey participants are not interested in learning.
- 5% of the survey participants are proficient in English.
- 3% of the survey participants have studied in Tamil medium school.

Q2 Are the listening activities useful to you in improving your listening skills?



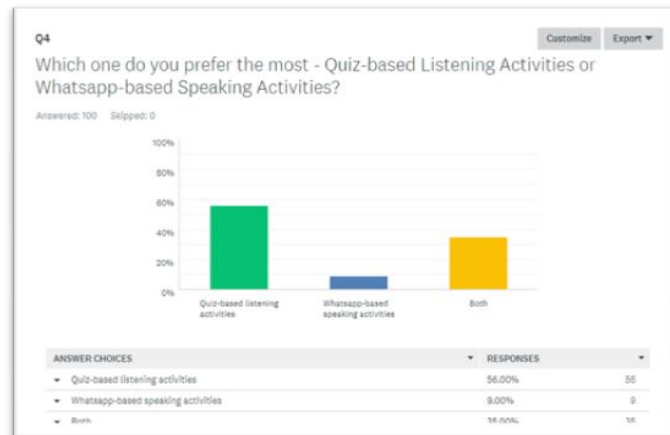
- a) 97% of the survey participants consider the listening activities useful in improving their listening skills.
- b) 3% of the survey participants consider the listening activities not useful in improving their listening skills.

Q3 Are the speaking activities useful to you in improving your speaking skills?



- 99% of the survey participants consider the speaking activities useful in improving their speaking skills.
- 1% of the survey participants consider the speaking activities not useful in improving their speaking skills.

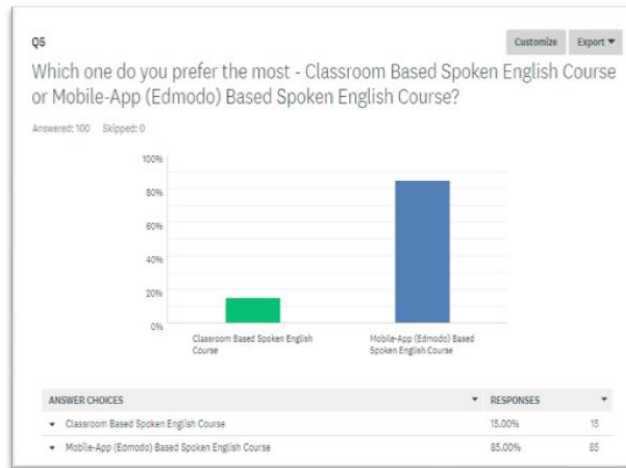
Q4 Which one do you prefer the most - Quiz-based Listening Activities or WhatsApp-based Speaking Activities?



- 56% of the survey participants prefer Quiz-based Listening Activities the most.
- 9% of the survey participants prefer WhatsApp-based speaking activities the most.
- 35% of the survey participants prefer both Quiz-based Listening Activities and WhatsApp-based speaking Activities.

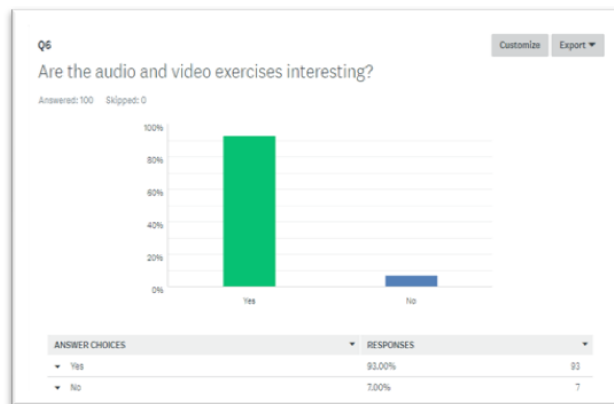
Q5 Which one do you prefer the most - Classroom Based Spoken English Course or Mobile-App (Edmodo) Based Spoken English Course?

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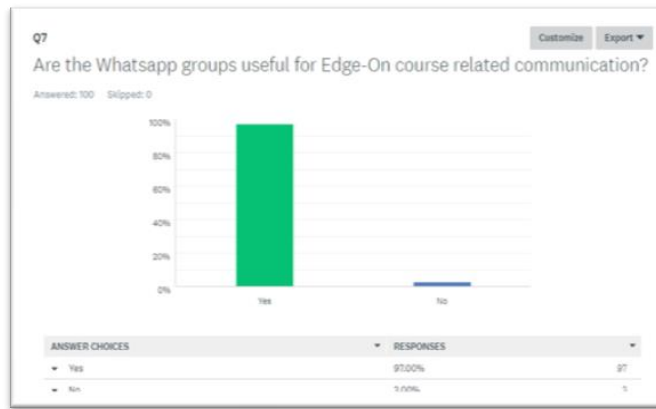
- 15% of the survey participants prefer Classroom Based Spoken English course the most.
- 85% of the survey participants prefer Mobile-App (*Edmodo*) Based Spoken English course the most.

Q6 Are the audio and video exercises interesting?



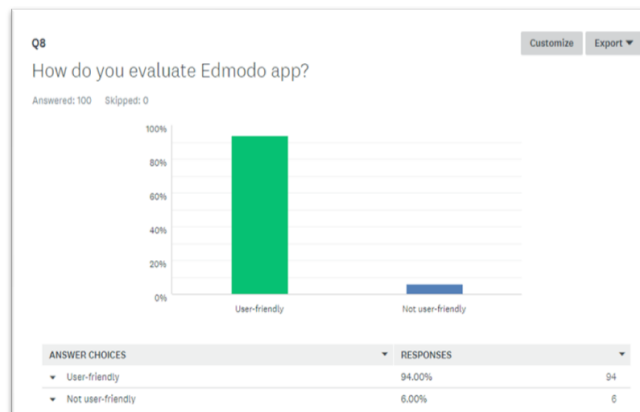
- 93% of the survey participants consider audio and video interesting.
- 7% of the survey participants consider audio and video not interesting.

Q7 Are the *Whatsapp* groups useful for Edge-On course related communication?



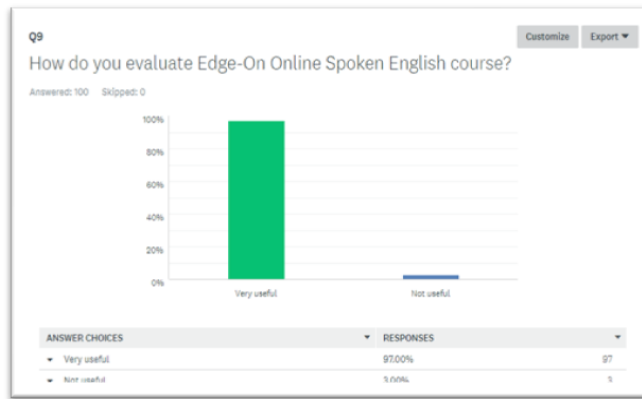
- 97% of the survey participants consider the *WhatsApp* groups useful for Edge-On course related communication.
- 3% of the survey participants consider the *WhatsApp* groups not useful for Edge-On course related communication.

Q8 How do you evaluate *Edmodo* app?



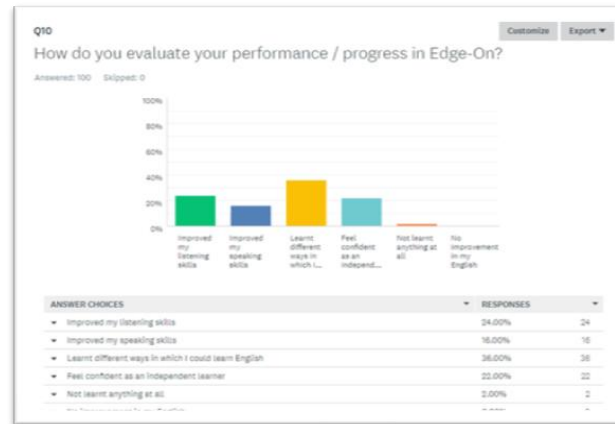
- 94% of the survey participants consider *Edmodo* as user-friendly.
- 6% of the survey participants consider *Edmodo* as not user-friendly.

Q9 How do you evaluate Edge-On Online Spoken English course?



- 97% of the survey participants consider Edge-On Online Spoken English course very useful.
- 3% of the survey participants consider Edge-On Online Spoken English course not useful.

Q10 How do you evaluate your performance / progress in Edge On?



- According to 24% of the survey participants, *Edge On* Spoken English course has improved their listening skills.
- According to 16% of the survey participants, *Edge On* Spoken English course has improved their speaking skills.
- 35% of the survey participants have learnt different ways in which they could learn English.
- 22% of the survey participants have become confident as independent learners.
- 2% of the survey participants have not learnt anything at all.
- None of the survey participants has chosen the option ‘No improvement in my English’ which implies that *Edge On* Online Spoken English course has created an impact on all the course participants at the undergraduate level.

Students’ Qualitative Feedback on *Edge On* Online Spoken English Course

The researcher interviewed the course participants (the undergraduate students of B.A., B.Sc., BCA, B.Com., BBA) to know about their general opinions about the *Edge On* Online Spoken English. As the undergraduate classes contained mixed ability students, some of them opined that the course was easy while others felt that it was difficult.

Some students found the speaking activities very difficult. They wanted a basic level Spoken English course. A few others said that there was no development in their language skills; they needed advanced level course in *Edmodo*. Some of the difficulties faced by the students were:

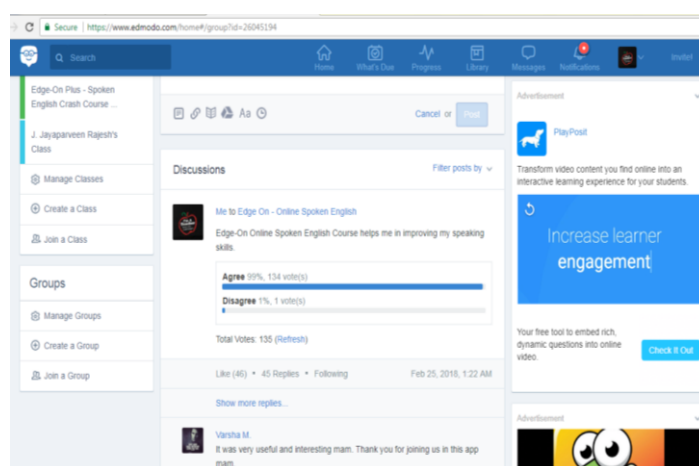
- Installing the *Edmodo* app took too much time.
- There were too many advertisements while using *Edmodo* app.
- The phone hanged due to memory overload.
- Videos downloaded very slowly.
- Some students said that the videos were very slow, and they had to skip the video to avoid boredom.
- Some students remarked that the videos were boring.
- Video volume was very low.
- Listening exercises were more in number.
- Some questions were difficult to understand.
- One week was given to complete one module. Even that time limit was too short for a few students.
- They wanted extra time, to avoid being pressurised to do their assignments.
- Some felt bored while doing the listening and speaking activities.
- Some students accepted that they were too lazy to do the speaking activities.
- For some of them, the accent used in the animations or videos was very difficult to understand.
- Some of them said that the speaking activities were very difficult.

Some of the positive comments given by the course participants were:

- Most of the students preferred quiz-based listening activities to WhatsApp-based speaking activities.
- Most of them felt that listening activities were easier than speaking activities.
- Listening activities were interesting as the videos were clear, and the multiple-choice questions were easy to answer.
- Some students suggested giving a sample activity before every speaking exercise to get an idea about how to proceed with it.
- Some students had got help from their siblings, helping them improve their speaking skills too.
- Many students remarked that they felt conscious about doing the speaking activities. After recording their speaking response in *WhatsApp*, they had heard it again, checked for errors, and corrected them before sending to the teachers. This had helped them gain confidence which would be helpful while attending interviews.
- Some said that after doing this course some students had started talking in English in the class.

- Some of the students felt that there was no scope for talking in English inside the campus. Speaking activities in *WhatsApp* created space for them to talk in English.
- Students remarked that *WhatsApp* groups were useful for communication purpose. Reminders sent in the *WhatsApp* groups were quite useful.
- These groups were beneficial for the students to clarify their doubts quickly.
- Students who were not in the *WhatsApp* group faced difficulties in following the deadlines in doing the exercises.
- Many students said that *Edmodo* was very useful, and they learnt a lot from the course.
- Many students said that they were motivated to do the course. A few students remarked that they completed the course only out of compulsion.

Students' Poll in *Edmodo* app



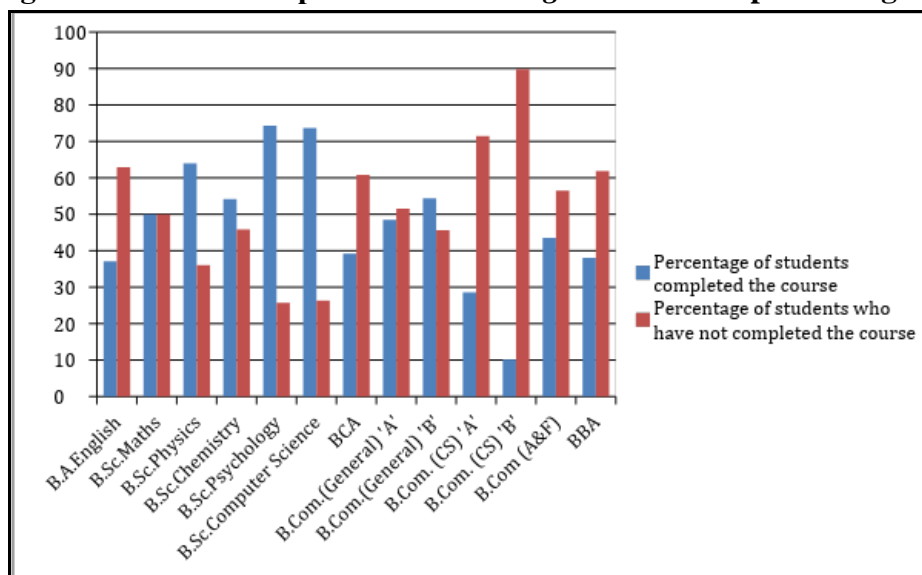
- ‘Student Poll’ is launched in the *Edmodo* app. 134 out of 135 students have answered positively to it showing that 99% of the student participants find *Edge-On Online Spoken English Course* useful to them in developing their listening and speaking skills.

5.1 Table Showing the Students’ Completion Rate of *Edge On Spoken English Course*:

Name of the Department	No. of students completed <i>Edge On Online Spoken English</i> course	Percentage of students completed <i>Edge On Online Spoken English</i> course	No. of students who have not completed the course	Percentage of students who have not completed the course
B.A.English	23	37	39	63
B.Sc.Maths	21	50	21	50
B.Sc.Physics	16	64	9	36
B.Sc.Chemistry	13	54	11	46

B.Sc.Psychology	26	74	9	26
B.Sc. Computer Science	28	74	10	26
BCA	20	39	31	61
B.Com. (General) 'A'	32	48	34	52
B.Com. (General) 'B'	37	54	31	46
B.Com. (CS) 'A'	14	29	35	71
B.Com. (CS) 'B'	6	10	53	90
B.Com (A&F)	27	44	35	56
BBA	16	38	26	62

5.2 Graph Showing the Students' Completion Rate of *Edge On* Online Spoken English Course:



- 63% of I year B.A. (English) students have not completed the mobile app Edmodo-based *Edge On* Online Spoken English course.
- 50% of I year B.Sc. (Maths) students have not completed the mobile app Edmodo-based *Edge On* Online Spoken English course.
- 36% of I year B.Sc. (Physics) students have not completed the mobile app Edmodo-based *Edge On* Online Spoken English course.
- 46% of I year B.Sc. (Chemistry) students have not completed the mobile app Edmodo-based *Edge On* Online Spoken English course.
- 26% of I year B.Sc. (Psychology) students have not completed the mobile app Edmodo-based *Edge On* Online Spoken English course.
- 26% of I year B.Sc. (Computer Science) students have not completed the mobile app Edmodo-based *Edge On* Online Spoken English course.
- 61% of I year BCA students have not completed the mobile app Edmodo-based *Edge On* Online Spoken English course.

- 52% of I year B.Com. General ‘A’ students have not completed the mobile app Edmodo-based *Edge On* Online Spoken English course.
- 46% of I year B.Com. General ‘B’ students have not completed the mobile app Edmodo-based *Edge On* Online Spoken English course.
- 71% of I year B.Com. CS ‘A’ students have not completed the mobile app Edmodo-based *Edge On* Online Spoken English course.
- 90% of I year B.Com. CS ‘B’ students have not completed the mobile app Edmodo-based *Edge On* Online Spoken English course.
- 56% of I year B.Com. (A&F) students have not completed the mobile app Edmodo-based *Edge On* Online Spoken English course.
- 62% of I year BBA students have not completed the mobile app Edmodo-based *Edge On* Online Spoken English course.

Key Findings

Though majority of the students enjoy using the mobile app *Edmodo* to learn, only the motivated students in each class have completed the *Edge On* Online Spoken English. This implies that mobile technology can sustain the interest of the learners and help the motivated students learn and perform better, but it cannot develop ‘learner autonomy’ in the least motivated students.

Recommendations

To develop or promote learner autonomy, teachers or instructors can try using the procedure suggested by Nunan (196-202):

1. Make instruction goals clear to learners
2. Allow learners to create their own goals
3. Encourage learners to use their second language outside the classroom
4. Raise awareness of learning processes
5. Help learners identify their own preferred styles and strategies
6. Encourage learner choice
7. Allow learners to generate their own tasks
8. Encourage learners to become teachers
9. Encourage learners to become researchers

Limitations of the Study

- The samples belong to only one college.
- They all are in first year undergraduate course.
- Their medium of instruction in school is not considered.
- Their socio-economic backgrounds are not taken into account.

Scope for Further Research

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Developing Learner Autonomy Using the Mobile App Edmodo - An Evaluative Study

- Use of mobile app *Edmodo* in English as Second Language (ESL) Learning can be analysed in detail.
- The influence of mobile technology in developing the students' LSRW skills can be discussed in detail.
- The effectiveness of *Edmodo* can be compared with other LMS like *G-Suite*.

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