



## UFM Students' Propensities of Lifelong Learning as EFL Learners

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### Abstract

In order for a person to use a foreign language fluently and effectively, it takes a lifelong endeavor. Therefore, learning a language does not just occur in a typical classroom, but it must be done in an extensive learning environment where learners are ready for lifelong learning perspective. Determining language learners' readiness for lifelong learning (LLL) in order to support their language development is of great importance. This paper reports a group of UFM students' propensities of lifelong learning as EFL learners. The quantitative study with 27-item questionnaire involved 134 students as non-English majors. The results show that most students have typical characteristics to become EFL lifelong learners, and ideas to develop their English language learning has been offered.

**Keywords:** lifelong learning, EFL learners, propensities

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### 1. Introduction

Many students have come to identify learning with formal education at schools, colleges, and universities, and they have been encouraged to pursue a good education. Formal education and certifications are crucial. Schooling is only one sort of learning, and there are other more ways to expand your knowledge and build the skills you will need throughout your life. In the information age, people are required to have abilities like critical thinking, problem solving, communication, collaborative working, creativity, digital literacy, information literacy, media literacy, and information and communication technologies literacy (Trilling and Fadel, 2009). Individuals should not only acquire knowledge in a passive manner in order to develop these talents, but they should also use the knowledge they gain in life to acquire the skills of learning to learn, thereby becoming lifelong learners (Brown, 2005). As a result, lifelong learning is viewed as one of the talents that individuals must possess in order to reach their full potential.

According to a news post on the Ministry of Education and Training's website, lifelong learning provides everyone with opportunities to face new challenges and is an important aspect of the national education system. Education should not be limited to the classroom, but should be practiced at all times and in all places. As a fundamental need in an industrial society, lifelong learning has always been the world's top priority. This is currently the most pressing issue in the face of the fourth industrial revolution. To stay up with changing world conditions and quick developments, individuals must constantly learn, develop, and renew themselves, as well as provide new information (Kogce *et al.*, 2014). There have been several previous research on lifetime learning tendencies. (Tanju Deveci, 2013; Niki, Antonia, *et al.*, 2016; Burak Ayçiçek and Burcu Karafil, 2021; Tanju Deveci, 2013; Niki, Antonia, *et al.*)<sup>[12]</sup> However, this study is being undertaken in the setting of the University of Finance and Marketing to investigate students' levels of lifelong learning propensities as EFL learners. The findings of this study are expected to aid the author in developing better teaching methods that will encourage students to practice continuous learning.

### 2. Literature Review

#### 2.1. Definitions of lifelong learning

Learning activities that persist in all areas of human life and are crucial in the development of humanity without regard to time or space are referred to as lifelong learning (Aksoy *et al.*, 2017; Gu *et al.*; 2011). Furthermore, lifelong learning is defined as a

process by which individuals enhance their abilities and knowledge over the course of their lives (Aspin and Chapman, 2000). Lifelong learning is defined as "all purposeful learning activity undertaken throughout life with the aim of improving knowledge, skills, and competencies within a personal, civic, social, and/or employment related perspective," according to the Commission of the European Communities (CEC) (2000: 3). Lifelong learning is a process that extends beyond the classroom and occurs at all stages of life (Knapper and Cropley, 2000) <sup>[20]</sup>. Furthermore, the major rationale for lifelong learning is that it is impossible to provide students with all of the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed throughout their lives through schooling alone. People must constantly improve their knowledge and abilities in order to overcome obstacles and attain personal development (Sharples, 2000).

As a result, lifelong learning aspires to interiorize education, achieving universal learning possibilities, and giving learning chances not only in educational institutions but also in a variety of learning environments (Kehm, 2001). Individuals are also able to properly control their feelings and available resources during this process, as well as be willing to learn and direct their own learning processes (De la Harpe and Radloff, 2000). It is the goal of lifelong learning to support individuals in gaining the knowledge, skills, understanding, and values they will need in the future (Ambrósio *et al.*, 2014). Individuals with lifelong learning skills can plan their own learning, are open to learning in both informal and formal settings, can apply their existing knowledge to a variety of subject fields in appropriate situations, are active and can use a variety of learning strategies to solve problems and for various situations (Knapper and Cropley, 2000) <sup>[20]</sup>. Individuals need also have excellent communicative skills in both their mother tongue and a foreign language, be open to learning, use technology, be active, and have cultural awareness, according to the argument (Kaplan, 2016).

According to the definitions above, lifelong learning is a process in which learners must be able to control their own learning techniques in order to acquire skills and knowledge not only in a formal but also in an informal educational context.

## 2.2. Language learning and lifelong learning

In 1995, the European Communities Commission produced a white paper on lifelong learning in response to increased life expectancy and apparent shifts in age structures. As a result, new goals for all state members were established, with a strong emphasis on lifelong learning (LLL). In terms of language study, the White Paper stated the goal of encouraging citizens of member countries to become proficient in at least three European languages. It was suggested that permitting people to work and go overseas would offer them with both occupational and personal benefits. The European Commission encouraged the provision of language training resources for young learners through the SOCRATES program, believing that learning a foreign language should become one of the cornerstones of obtaining knowledge. Early exposure to studying a second language enhances competency in that language while simultaneously raising awareness of one's own mother tongue, according to the White Paper. People may develop more open minds,

intellectual agility, and cultural horizons as a result. Foreign language acquisition is especially vital in vocational training since it makes people more employable, according to the White Paper.

The UNESCO Institute of Education changed its name to the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) in 2006 to reflect the notion of lifelong learning, whether in school, out of school, or in other ways. The importance of languages and language learning is highlighted in two of the Institute's medium-term policy documents (UNESCO Institute of Education, 2003; UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2009). The relevance of languages in preserving cultural variety is emphasized in the first strategy paper. It is claimed that teaching local languages functions as a bridge to teaching other languages since they reflect the distinctiveness of local communities and show young people their history and cultural originality. The second document, on the other hand, addresses the issues and highlights the advantages of lifelong learning at the individual, societal, and global levels.

## 2.3. Essential characteristics of an EFL lifelong learners

Lifelong learning can be divided into four categories, according to Coskun & Demirel (2012) <sup>[11]</sup>: motivation, self-regulation, perseverance, and curiosity.

Motivation can be intrinsic or extrinsic, and it is defined as "the process of allocating energy to maximize the satisfaction of demands" (Pritchard & Ashwood, 2008, p. 6) <sup>[30]</sup>. Intrinsic motivation is defined by Ryan & Deci (2000, p. 54) <sup>[32]</sup> as "doing something because it is fundamentally fascinating or enjoyable," while extrinsic motivation is defined as "doing something because it leads to a separate outcome," such as a reward or avoidance of punishment. Intrinsic motivation appears to be what makes learning more fun and meaningful; as a result, it must be cultivated through assignments that are relevant and meaningful to students (McCombs, 1991). According to Deveci (2013) <sup>[12]</sup>, intrinsic motivation can be produced if empirical learning is recognized. Language learners' intrinsic motivation improves if they are interested in the people whose language they are learning and eager to integrate into their culture, according to Falk (quoted in Holt, 2001) <sup>[16]</sup>. In order for learning to be lifelong, intrinsic motivation is required. It's also worth noting that motivation is a dynamic rather than a static feature (Shoab & Dornyei, 2005) <sup>[36]</sup>: learners are likely to show varying levels of motivation, especially when learning over long periods of time. Self-regulation is another area of LLL skills that incorporates genuinely motivated persons who are self-directed learners. Holec (1981, p. 3) defines autonomy as "the ability to take responsibility of one's own learning," emphasizing skills such as planning, selecting resources, monitoring progress, and evaluating learning. In terms of language learning, Williams and Burden (1997) claim that autonomous learners prefer to acquire a language in a self-regulated manner using their own skills and tactics. Self-regulated learners, according to Knowles (1975), are capable of diagnosing their learning needs, devising action plans, and evaluating the entire learning process. Self-regulated learners, according to Knapper & Cropley (2000) <sup>[20]</sup>, are also capable of changing their learning processes to new contexts and possess analytical thinking skills that allow them to

connect knowledge from many fields. Perseverance, described by Merriam-Webster as "continuous attempt to do or achieve anything despite challenges, failure, or opposition," is the third category of LLL skills. Rovai (2003, p. 1) <sup>[31]</sup> offers another definition: "the conduct of continuing to perform despite the presence of barriers." These two definitions show that persistent people persevere in the face of adversity and failure when it comes to learning. According to Bandura (1989), people who have strong self-esteem in terms of their learning abilities are more persistent and effective at solving problems. Those with poor self-esteem, on the other hand, are more likely to give up or settle for a mediocre answer. They will also be more stressed and anxious, which will be exacerbated by their ongoing worry about their abilities to deal with difficulties. As a result, they will be less likely to value accomplishments or set themselves difficult learning goals. According to Pajares (2002) <sup>[28]</sup>, if people are unsure that they will be able to meet their goals, they will be less motivated to act or persevere when faced with challenges, which would diminish their chances of becoming lifelong learners. When it comes to language learners, the causes for poor endurance skills may be more obvious. Because they are afraid of being mocked, learners of a foreign language are more likely to avoid making mistakes. Language learners who have previously failed may also have reduced self-efficacy. Persuasion, encouragement, and positive assessments from teachers, peers, and parents may be needed to assist these students acquire a better sense of effectiveness. Their earlier bad experiences may have less impact after this is accomplished (Dornyei, 1994). Curiosity is the fourth category of lifelong learning skills. Curiosity, according to Litman (2005) <sup>[23]</sup>, is a desire to learn, see, or feel something new that stimulates exploratory action aimed at acquiring new knowledge. (793 p.) This definition implies that in order for people to grow, they must be compelled to learn new things and engage in new learning situations. Curiosity and motivation are inextricably linked, so this is likely to lead to intrinsic drive for learning. Curiosity allows individuals and species to survive, according to Bruner (1968), who also noted that "curiosity is nearly a prototype of the intrinsic incentive" (p. 114). Learning can only become lifelong if the attitude toward learning is persistent. This necessitates a level of commitment to learning. Curiosity is an intrinsic trait, as evidenced by babies' experiences of learning through exploration. Although newborns' curiosity is typically regarded as a desirable trait, as people grow older, their interest may be constrained owing to a variety of causes, including a lack of "uncertainty in the adult's world that has to be explored" (Piccone, 1999). As a result, the motivation to study more may be hampered. We need opportunities for critical thinking through asking questions in order to cultivate our inborn curiosity. Although lifelong learners must be able to formulate their own questions, teachers might use Socratic inquiry to pique their students' interest.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. The study

The study aims to measure UFM students' propensities of lifelong learning as EFL learners based on the Lifelong Learning Tendency Scale (LLTS) developed by Coskun and Demirel (2012) <sup>[11]</sup>, with two research questions:

"How are UFM students' lifelong learning propensities shown as EFL learners?" and "Are there any differences in their lifelong learning propensities according to gender?"

LLTS is a 27-item questionnaire focusing on four main categories of skills which a learner is believed to have to become a lifelong learner. The questionnaire was translated into Vietnamese in order to avoid students' failure to understand it. The survey was conducted via the Internet where students received the questionnaire through a link designed on Google Forms.

#### 3.2. The participants

134 students participated in the research. The percentage of females accounted for 70.9%. The students' average age is 18.5, and they have various majors, mainly in Business and Marketing.

#### 3.3. Data analysis

As described earlier, LLLTS comprises four categories: a) motivation (6 items), b) perseverance (6 items), c) self-regulation (6 items), and d) curiosity (9 items). LLLTS includes both positive and negative statements. The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with the given statements on a six-point Likert scale with responses choices ranging from 6 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree).

The data was analyzed by Pivot Table to investigate students' propensities of lifelong learning and the difference between males and females in this area.

### 4. Result

#### 4.1. UFM students and their propensities as EFL lifelong learners

##### 4.1.1. Motivation

In this category, all the students who participated in the survey show a high level of motivation. This is shown in the fact that a large proportion of students (from 71.6% to 91%) students approve of the statements proving that they are motivated in learning English, new things and skills. The figure means that most of them are highly aware of learning as a part of personal development.

##### 4.1.2. Perseverance

All the items in this category focus on the statements showing that a learner is able to cope with obstacles while learning something. However, the percentage of students who show their agreements to these items is quite lower than in the first category (only between 49.3% and 73.9%). The big problem that prevents students from learning English and new skills is a tight schedule.

##### 4.1.3. Self-regulation

The number of respondents who show their disagreements to the statements in this area range from 50% to 80%. In fact, most the statements are negative. This means that a majority of the participants are able to manage their own learning from selecting materials for their study to assessing their learning.

##### 4.1.4. Curiosity

Most of the participants are curious about learning new things and knowledge. About 50 70% of people are in this group. They are willing to study new things and learn new

skills irrespective of whether they are facing a test or not. A minority of people admitted that they are still affected by financial health and that they could not learn something if that may interfere with their ability to make money. Some claimed that they value time spent with friends and families rather than learning something.

#### 4.2. Difference in lifelong learning propensities by gender

There is a bit difference between males and females in their propensities of EFL learners. In terms of motivation, either females or males are motivated to explore new knowledge or skills. In fact, an equal percentage of females and males responded that they are keen on learning English and new skills, and fully aware of the importance of learning English as well as new skills as they believed this is one of the vital factors for their personal development.

However, when it comes to the category of perseverance, males seem to be dominant in this area. While a majority of males (65%) show their patience when learning English and new things, only 35% of females are determined in their journey of learning. The factors that normally prevent females from studying are family matters and obstacles they may encounter during their learning process. On the other hand, these things can be easily overcome by men.

In contrast to perseverance, females seem to be far better than males in the way they manage their learning. In other words, females are more active in planning their study, selecting materials and dealing with the problems during the learning process. 50% of females are confident of self-regulating their study, whereas the figure for males is only 25%.

Lastly, curiosity is one of most important factors to activate the spirit of lifelong learning. Surprisingly, both females and males have no gap in this characteristic. They are always willing to learn something new regardless of the fact that they are required to do that or not. The proportion for both males and females in this area is almost the same (70%). Almost all of them believe that broadening their knowledge and sharpening their skills are the essential things in their lives.

#### 5. Discussion And Recommendations

The results show that the students who participated in this research, on the whole, have sufficient qualities which helps to facilitate their journey of lifelong learning as EFL learners. In other words, most of them have motivation, perseverance, self-regulation and curiosity which cannot be separated from autonomy and lifelong learning. However, it is undeniable that a minority of students in each class cannot reach that level. For example, a small number of them are not aware of the importance of learning English, find it hard to move on when encountering any problems or obstacles, cannot lead their own way of learning and do not have an enquiring mind. This lies with teachers' responsibility to make an effort to enhance students' motivation, and other aspects of lifelong learning as EFL learners. In particular, students' motivation can be created by bringing positive energy to the classroom with interesting learning activities, thereby instilling students a passion for learning English where students can learn it on their own. As regards perseverance, some students are so fed up with their tight

schedule that they almost have no energy for pursuing any other interests. This has to do with senior management of each educational institution. They should give students suitable schedule which permits them to learn English and other skills to support their overall development.

Also, teachers should pay attention to the quality of lessons in which students can develop their sense of curiosity. Questions from teachers are also expected to be thought-provoking so that students can be involved in classroom activities. Otherwise, it would be impossible to arouse any curiosity from them.

In summary, students will gradually develop these aspects of lifelong learning as EFL learners as long as teachers give adequate attention to their teaching process, and once teachers can do this, it means they already give students 'a fishing rod' so that students can 'feed themselves' their whole lifetime.

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