

[Research Note]

## **Introduction of a Learner Autonomy Management System (LAMS)**

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### **Keywords**

website, materials, communicative competence, EIL, ELF, blended language learning, BLL, learner autonomy, autonomous learning, language-learning strategies, meta-cognitive awareness, learning management system, content management system, LMS, CMS, computer-assisted language learning, CALL, LAMS

### **Rationale**

As Chen and Peng (2014) point out, autonomous learning is important if learners are to continue developing their English-language skills between/beyond educational institutions. They recommend that teachers “cultivate students’ abilities of learner autonomy” and “shift their roles from decision-makers to facilitators” (p. 304) by teaching learners how to learn autonomously. Doing so would help learners to develop attitudes, habits, and skills that would prepare them for the kind of independent study that is needed once learners graduate or leave an institution. What could facilitate teachers in their efforts to do the above, and also learners when engaging in post-institution independent study, is a set of online tools focused specifically on encouraging learner autonomy. To the best of the current researcher’s knowledge, a single set of online tools to do that does not yet exist. The purpose of this article is to introduce such a set of tools, a “learner autonomy management system” (LAMS), which has been developed by the current researcher for tertiary-level English-language learners in Japan.

### **Is LA pedagogically effective?**

Over the past three decades, a great deal of research has focused on learner autonomy (see Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012 and Figura & Jarvis, 2007 for reviews). In terms of pedagogical effectiveness, studies continue to demonstrate that encouraging learner autonomy can have positive effects on the process of learning and also learner outcomes in f2f (face-to-face) English courses (e.g. Ariza & Sanchez, 2013; Hart, 2002; Hourdequin, 2013; Kim, 2014; Nguyen & Gu, 2013). For example, in their study, Nguyen and Gu (2013) used an experimental design and strategy-based instruction (SBI) in an effort to improve learner autonomy in the writing-focused component of their course. They found that the experimental groups outperformed the control groups in writing improvements both within the study time frame and after a delay of six weeks.

### **What are the core aspects of learner autonomy?**

In their extensive review of the literature, Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) highlighted the work of Sinclair (2000), who outlined what many believe to be the core aspects of learner autonomy. Among those are: (1) that learner autonomy is the capacity and willingness of learners to take responsibility for their own learning; (2) that learners’ conscious awareness of learning processes needs to be raised in order to encourage learner autonomy; (3) that learner autonomy can be exercised both in a f2f class and during the learner’s own self-study time; (4) that learner autonomy has a social aspect; and (5) that learner autonomy is more than just teaching language-

learning strategies (p. 5). What should be added is Betts' (2004, as cited in, Chen & Peng, 2014) assertion that an autonomous learner is one who is a life-long learner. The current researcher would argue that English-language learning *is* a life-long pursuit and well-developed learner autonomy *is* a necessary attribute of learners who succeed at that pursuit. Further, language courses and online tools need to aim to encourage the aspects above in order to encourage the kind of autonomy that is needed to achieve success.

### **Can online tools be used? An existing LMS?**

Research investigating the effect of using online tools to encourage learner autonomy indicates that such tools can be used to do so. At a tertiary institution in Thailand, Sanprasert (2010) used the integration of a course management system (CMS) into a f2f course and found that it had positive results, with learners setting goals more, doing more outside of class to achieve those goals, and engaging in meta-cognitive processes, such as monitoring and evaluating, more. At a tertiary institution in Japan, Smith and Craig (2013) used computer- (i.e. word processing), online- (i.e. email), and paper-based tools and found that learners could be encouraged to use CALL (computer-assisted language learning) materials autonomously through consciousness raising about language-learning strategy use and critical self-reflection. They recommended that at least part of their paper-based system for encouraging such learner autonomy be converted to an online tool. This research would seem to indicate not only the effectiveness of online tools for encouraging learner autonomy, but also the potential superiority of online tools over paper-based tools. To take this research further, it does seem necessary to consider to what extent existing learning management systems, because they are a platform from which such online tools are used, could go further in encouraging learner autonomy.

Existing learning management systems are obviously of great use to both teachers and learners. Further, a wide body of research related to blended-language learning (see e.g. Eydelman, 2013; Hamata, Azmanb, Noorc, Bakard, & Nore, 2014; Miyazoe & Anderson, 2012; and see Whittaker, 2013 for a review) demonstrates that a variety of online tools, such as email, blogs, wikis, Skype, YouTube, and also the built-in features of many learning management systems used by tertiary institutions, could potentially be used to encourage learner autonomy. The right tools do exist and can be blended in one or more pedagogically and contextually appropriate ways using an LMS. However, what existing learning management systems do not seem to have built in are the core aspects of learner autonomy mentioned earlier (e.g. raising learners' conscious awareness of learning processes). This could be rectified. However, do they factor in the fact that learning continues across the learner's lifetime and certainly beyond any one institution? It does not seem so. As a result, an LMS may not be the most appropriate platform for encouraging learner autonomy.

There are additional reasons. Sluijs and Hover (2009) remind us that existing learning management systems lack personalization. Further, Reinders and Hubbard (2012) state that technology can help learners to "make decisions based on past performance and future needs", "identify their learning needs, plan their learning and monitor their progress" (p. 361), and gain knowledge related to what resources are most suitable for them and how to best use them. The current researcher would argue that existing learning management systems lack the ability to help learners to engage in such meta-cognitive processes. Personalization and functionality to allow the learner to develop his/her meta-cognitive skills in order to better manage his/her language learning

are both affordances that an online tool focused on encouraging learner autonomy needs to offer. What would seem necessary, then, is a “learner autonomy management system” (LAMS). This could be conceptualized as an online platform for use by a learner across his/her lifetime that is personalized, that develops the learner’s capacity and willingness to take on more responsibility for his/her own learning, that raises his/her awareness of learning processes, that informs him/her about and encourages his/her use of language-learning strategies, that encourages collaboration with his/her fellow language learners, and that has benefits for learning processes within the f2f classroom. Such a system would be, in some respects, a “meta-LMS” since it would be the online tool that a learner would use to manage his/her learning at different institutions and (potentially) using different learning management systems.

### **What are the challenges likely to be?**

Previous research indicates that a variety of challenges could be faced by any attempt to design, develop, and integrate such an LAMS. One relates to learner interest in developing autonomy. Altimari, Plastina, Cronin, and Caria (2013) found that learners in their study indicated only moderate engagement in personal learning processes, such as self-assessment. Another challenge relates to autonomous learning training. As Burket (2011) found, depending on the culture, institutions may expect learners to be autonomous, but may not adequately prepare them to be so. Or, the culture may be such that learners continue to have a dependence on the teacher as an authority figure transmitting knowledge rather than as a facilitator (Zou, 2011). A further challenge relates to learner attitudes towards online tools, with Dogoriti (2014) indicating that some learners lack enthusiasm for such tools. In addition, previous research demonstrates that learners require training in order to benefit from autonomous CALL activities (Boulton, Chateau, Pereiro & Azzam-Hannacki, 2008; Smith & Craig, 2013). A final challenge relates to sustainability, which involves, among other things, maximizing the usefulness and life span of an online tool or a set of them. Research in this area indicates that teacher and learner agency (Blin, Caws, Hamel, Heift, Schulze, & Smith, 2013) and ease of use and updating (Kern, 2013) are key. These are clearly challenges that need to be considered and overcome not only during integration, but also much earlier, in the design process.

What also needs to be pointed out is the fact that the wider concept of autonomy continues to be negotiated by researchers and teachers. Schmenk (2005) contends that autonomy is “not a universal and neutral concept” and that it “encompasses a critical awareness of one’s own possibilities and limitations within a particular context” (pp. 115-116). Research by Hata et al. (1993, as cited in, Aoki, 2001) and data from Aoki’s (2001) own case study at a tertiary institution in Japan illustrate this. Not all learners may consider the acquisition of academic- and work-oriented knowledge and skills to be their primary motivation for attending university: “In retrospect, Yuki thinks what she learned at university was subjectivity. Because no one told her what to do, she was in a situation where she was able to choose what she liked and decide to do it for herself. Because those decisions were her own, she was determined to succeed, which was the source of her motivation. She would act on her own and try to solve any problems she encountered” (p. 87). The current researcher would argue that this aspect of autonomy should factor into the design of any LAMS.

## How should it be designed?

In order to design the LAMS, the current researcher drew on the work of Allum (2013), with principles reviewed in Allum's article being applied to the current research. First, in terms of SLA principles, the researcher determined that the following areas of the literature would be drawn on: learner autonomy, learner self-regulation, life-long learning, blended-language learning (BLL), communicative competence, learner motivation, language-learning strategies (LLS), learner self-reflection, learner-learner collaboration, and language-learning myths and ethnocentric tendencies. Second, in terms of Human Computer Interaction (HCI) principles, the researcher mainly considered the user model and the designer model. Finally, in terms of the interface design process, the researcher drew on the work of Redmond-Pyle (1995, as cited in, Allum, 2013) who conceptualized the design process as: "define users, analyze user tasks, define requirements, define usability requirements, model user objects, adopt and apply style guidelines, prototype, analyze tasks, evaluate, modify, evaluate" (p. 7).

The researcher expected that the intended user would view the LAMS as a free online resource for managing his/her language learning. For the user to want to sign up and learn more about it, the sign-up process would need to be simple and fast. For the user to want to use the LAMS even to a limited extent, it would need to have a simple and intuitive interface and functionality, and would need to feature functionality and content appealing and useful to EIL learners in the Japanese context. For the user to want to continue using the LAMS (especially to the extent intended), it would need to, among other things: (1) produce results in the form of demonstrating to the user that he/she was developing as an EIL learner; (2) help the user to stay motivated; and (3) help to make the user's study time productive and enjoyable.

From the perspective of the researcher as designer, the LAMS would need to - through the functionality and content that it provided - foster learner autonomy, help build users' inter-cultural communicative competence, and ultimately, facilitate users' English-language acquisition. It would be an LAMS that could either incorporate or not incorporate support (e.g. feedback) from a user's teachers. Given the workload of, and time constraints on, most teachers, making teacher support an essential rather than an available element of the LAMS could reduce its practicality and usefulness. The researcher conceived the LAMS to be a system mainly for facilitating and managing learner autonomy both while a user is enrolled at a specific institution (secondary, tertiary, or English-language school) and also once he/she is between/beyond institutions.

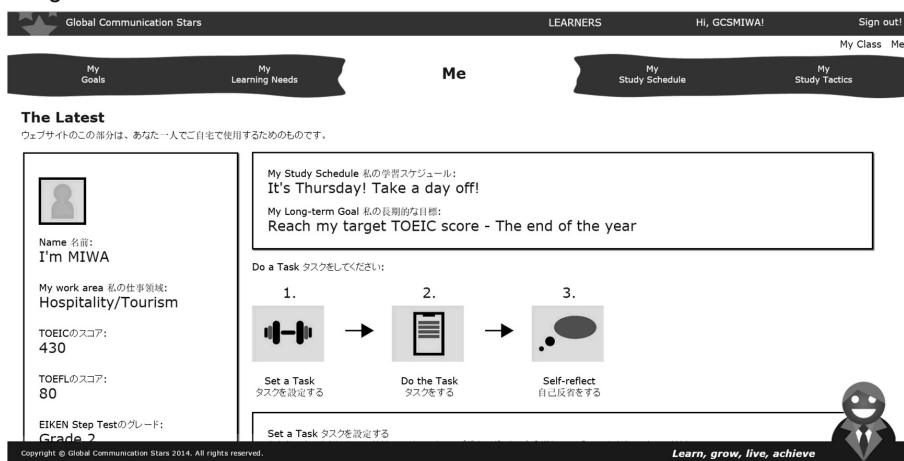
The following outlines the process engaged in to ensure that the design of the LAMS would encourage learner motivation. In her review of the literature for the development of an online framework for self-regulated, goal-directed learning, Uehara (2012) notes the importance of goal setting to academic success. She cites Dornyei (2009, as cited in, Uehara, 2012), pointing out the importance of learners having an elaborate, vivid, and plausible future EIL self image along with a clear understanding of how the learner will realize that future EIL self and the negative consequences if he/she does not. She also cites Schunk (2001), pointing out that goals can be long-term or short-term in nature, and that long-term goals should be divided up into a succession of attainable short-term goals. Based on this, the researcher determined that this section of the LAMS would need to enable the user to maintain up-to-date details about his/her future EIL self image and also manage his/her goal setting and goal-directed actions. To do this, the researcher followed the steps recommended by

Redmond-Pyle as outlined above. Briefly, this involved a process of defining, prototyping, and evaluating and modifying (repeated several times) until the relevant aspects of the LAMS were complete. This same process was followed for all other aspects of the LAMS.

### What comprises the LAMS?

There are three sections to the LAMS: “Me”, the “Globit” profile pages, and “My Class”. The “Me” section aims to provide a personal and personalized online space for learners to manage their own language-learning development. First, the learner is able to set a long-term goal and three short-term goals to help him/her achieve the long-term goal. Second, the learner is able to self-reflect on his/her learning needs and set which aspects of his/her communicative competence (Canale, 1983) that he/she needs to work on (using a six-point scale ranging from “1. I need to do this.” to “6. I don’t need to do this.”). These are categorized according to language (linguistic competence), conversation (discourse competence), culture (socio-cultural competence), and problems (strategic competence). The learner is also able to input his/her scores for any proficiency tests taken (e.g TOEIC, TOEFL, IELTS, EIKEN, CASEC). Third, the learner is able to manage his/her study time by keeping an up-to-date study schedule (see Smith & Craig, 2013). Fourth, the learner is able to choose from a list of study tactics and create his/her own list using those that he/she chooses. The learner does all of this after signing up and signing in for the first time.

Image 1: “The Latest” in the “Me” section



Having entered the basic information about him/herself, the learner is brought to the page above. This is the “Me - The Latest” page and is the main page from which the user will operate within the LAMS. The main objective of this page is to remind the learner of his/her current state of development and what his/her long-term goal is (which should help to motivate him/her), and to also provide him/her with an opportunity to complete common English tasks regularly (including those the learner has set as short-term goals). The learner does this using the “Do a Task” sub-section. There are a variety of task types to choose from. These include: “Do my English homework”, “Watch a short video on the Internet”, “Read a short news article”, and “Study from my TOEIC book”. Other tasks will be suggested tasks that will be dynamically served up by the LAMS

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based on the data saved by the learner in the LAMS's database. Such tasks will include those that will help the learner to continue working on those aspects of his/her communicative competence that he/she indicated still needing to work on (e.g. when signing in for the first time, if the learner indicated needing to start, continue, and finish conversations better, a suggested task may be "Learn more phrases for starting a conversation"). Another suggested task type will be that which has the learner read about important aspects of the applied linguistics and SLA literature to help him/her update his/her attitudes towards different aspects of language learning and reduce his/her ethnocentric tendencies and also his/her acceptance of language-learning myths.

The learner can manage the process of doing a task by doing three things. First, the learner sets the task. Second, the learner completes the task using an appropriate resource with the help of a timer (see Uehara, 2012) and a listing of the study tactics that he/she created previously. Third, the learner self-reflects about the task by answering four questions (see Smith & Craig, 2013).

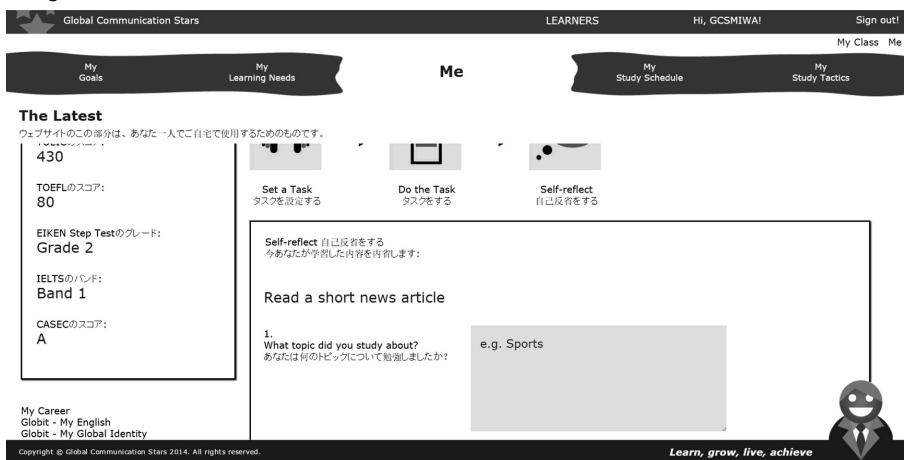
Image 2: "Set a Task" in the "Me" Section

The screenshot shows the 'Me' section of the LAMS interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'Global Communication Stars', 'LEARNERS', 'Hi, GCSEMIWA!', and 'Sign out!'. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with 'My Goals', 'My Learning Needs', 'Me', 'My Study Schedule', and 'My Study Tactics'. The main content area is titled 'The Latest' and contains a sidebar with user statistics: '430', 'TOEFLのスコア: 80', 'EIKEN Step Testのグレード: Grade 2', 'IELTSのバンド: Band 1', and 'CASECのスコア: A'. The main area features three buttons: 'Set a Task (タスクを設定する)', 'Do the Task (タスクをする)', and 'Self-reflect (自己反省をする)'. The 'Set a Task' button is active, and a task selection dialog is open. The dialog contains the text: 'Set a Task タスクを設定する', 'あなたタスクを設定してください! 以下のドロップダウンボックスから選択し、「Set!」をクリックしてください!', 'Short-term goals 短期目標: Use apps to study, Read short news articles, Watch short videos', a dropdown menu with 'Read a short news article' selected, and a 'Set!' button. At the bottom, there is a footer with 'My Career', 'Globit - My English', 'Globit - My Global Identity', 'Copyright © Global Communication Stars 2014. All rights reserved.', and the slogan 'Learn, grow, live, achieve' next to a smiley face icon.

Image 3: "Do the Task" in the "Me" Section

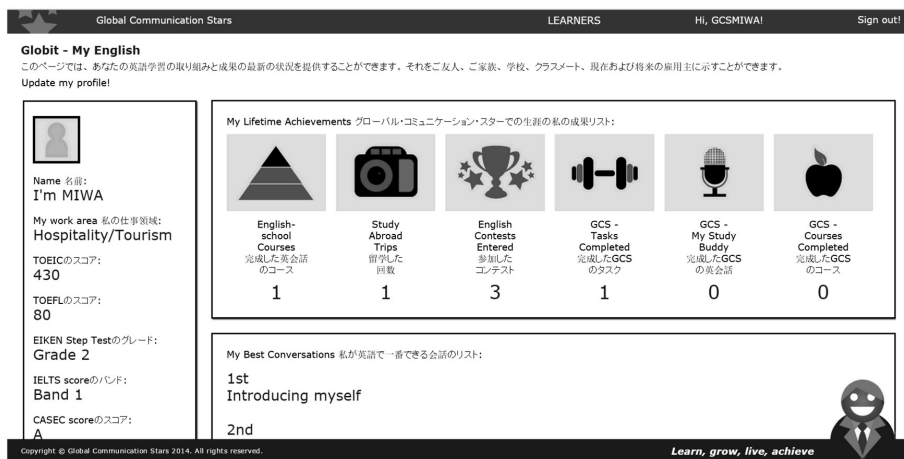
The screenshot shows the 'Do the Task' interface in the 'Me' section of the LAMS system. The layout is identical to Image 2, but the 'Do the Task' button is active. The task selection dialog is open, displaying: 'Do the Task タスクをする', '説明ください! あなたはタスクを設定しました。今それを行ってください! そうするために、あなた独自の教材を見つけるのはあなた次第です。直にお持ちの本、モバイルアプリ、インターネット、PCソフトウェア、またはテレビ/ラジオを使用することができます。工夫してください! また、長時間勉強する必要がないことも覚えておいてください。10分で十分です!', 'Read a short news article', '学習タスクを実行する場合、制限時間の設定をお勧めします。ここで時間制限を設定することができます: 00:00 Set timer! Start! Stop!', '学習タスクを行うときに役に立つように、あなたが追加した学習戦略のリストは次の通りです:', 'Tell yourself that you CAN do well on the learning task you're doing. 行っている学習タスクをうまくできると、自分に言い聞かせます。', and 'Think about how well you did on a learning task.' The footer is the same as in Image 2.

Image 4: “Self-reflect” in the “Me” Section



By following this process, the learner is completing the task in a way which is supported by the literature (learner agency, task-based language learning, time-limited study, language-learning strategies, and learner self-reflection). In addition, by self-reflecting, the learner can keep a permanent record of four or five words and phrases that he/she discovered during task completion. Every so often the learner will be required to complete quiz questions about the content entered to ensure that he/she has actually acquired it. What should make completing tasks in this way motivating for the learner is this: that the completion of each task adds something to his/her “Globit - My English” profile page.

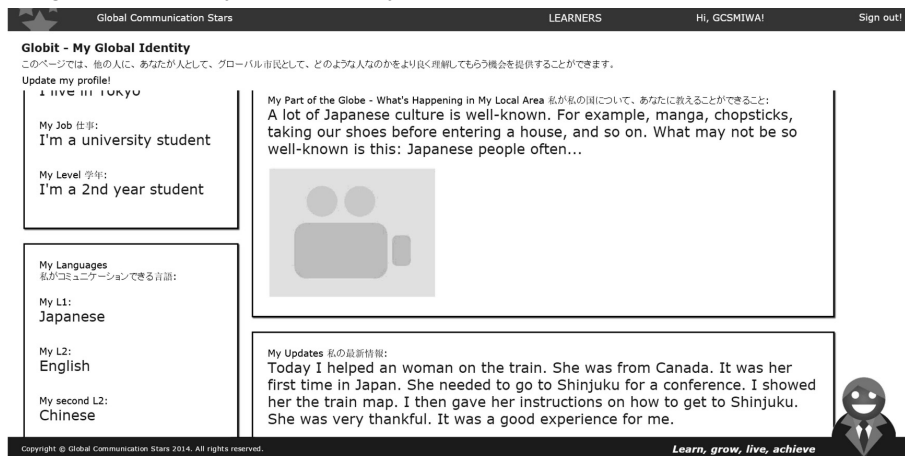
Image 5: “Globit - My English” section



The main objective of the “Globit - My English” section is to provide the learner with the opportunity to display data that he/she can use to self-promote, and potentially gain an edge, during the job-hunting process that he/she undertakes in his/her third year of university. Across time (from his/her first year at university, or even earlier), the learner will be able to start adding and generating data to be displayed on this, a publicly

viewable profile page, that he/she can then choose to show potential employers to not only display his/her various English-related proficiency scores, but to also demonstrate his/her efforts at learning the language and also his/her experiences with the language both domestically and abroad. Among the data displayed on the page will be the number of “Me” section tasks the learner has completed (e.g. Read a short news article or Learn more phrases for starting a conversation) along with a quiz percentage indicating the extent to which the learner has acquired the words and phrases entered during self-reflection. Other data will include the number of study-abroad trips taken, how the learner uses English regularly, a listing of the conversations (think functions) the learner is most competent at (which others will be able to endorse/confirm), a listing of any English-related contests the learner has entered/participated in, and a listing of the English-conversation schools the learner has studied at (with details about the courses taken and levels achieved being included). There will also be an emphasis on showcasing the learner’s improvement across time, and as such, analytics to indicate this will be listed (e.g. how much the learner has improved his/her TOEIC score). The learner will also be able to create a second profile page - his/her “Globit - My Global Identity” page - which focuses on helping him/her to display details related to his/her global identity, and in part, demonstrate how he/she uses English in his/her role as a global citizen. Data displayed on this page will include what languages the learner speaks, what countries he/she has been to, what e-pals he/she has, what global causes he/she supports (e.g. environmental conservation), how he/she actively makes the world a better place (e.g. I recycle my garbage), and regular posts to the page demonstrating how he/she uses English locally (but as a global citizen; e.g. I helped a woman on the train today. She needed to...) and his/her attempts to informally educate others about Japanese culture and the Japanese language.

Image 6: “Globit - My Global Identity” section



The final section of the LAMS is “My Class”. The “My Class” section aims to provide a space for learners within the same English course at a university to interact online and through a mobile phone application. The teacher of the class can easily set up the page for his/her class using another section of the website.



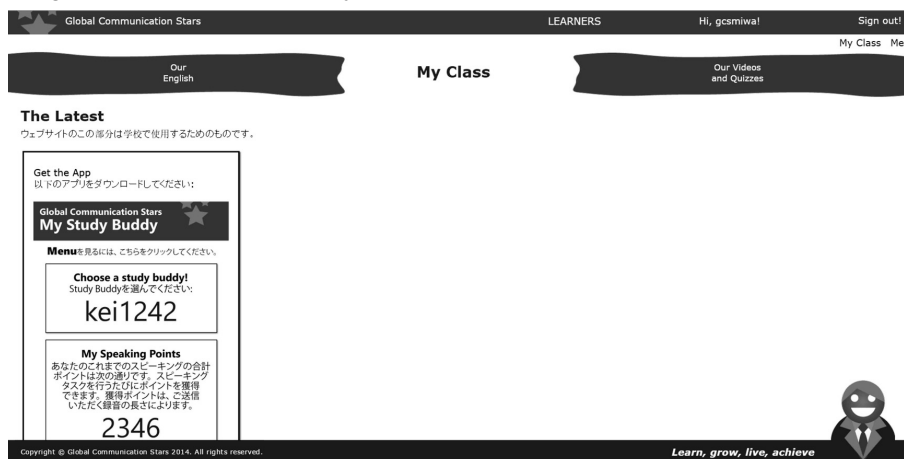
Image 7: “The Latest” in the “My Class” section



First, learners are placed into groups of six (based on the order in which the teacher adds learner names to the database) and each group is assigned a group name. The activities of each group within the LAMS are compared to those of the other groups in the same class with the relevant data being displayed on this page as the learners add and generate data. Second, the teacher can update the page weekly and set a topic for the learners to interact about outside of class. This mainly involves setting the week’s textbook topic as the topic on this page and encouraging learners to: (1) add English vocabulary and/or phrases that might help them to discuss the topic or be useful to them all in the future; and (2) add videos about the topic and also a learner-created quiz for each video. What can also be added is a simple communicative task that learners are encouraged to complete about the current week’s topic. Doing these things should encourage more active engagement with the topic across the week since the quantity and quality of the additions made by the groups are compared and such comparisons can be used as a source of learner motivation and also as part of the overall assessment for the course. Third, presuming that all learners in the class have a smart phone (that is, a phone with either the iOS or Android operating system), they can download a free mobile phone application which will allow them to interact verbally with a “study buddy” in their same group. The goal of the “My Study Buddy” application is to provide teachers with a way to encourage learners to pair up and to engage in English conversation outside of class through exchanging voice-recorded messages using their phones, and for those interactions to be available to the teacher using the LAMS database. A range of sections which encourage a task-based exchange of voice recordings are provided in the mobile application (for example, “My Moments”, using which the learners can tell each other about their day, and “Do me a favor!”, using which one learner can request that the other learner watches a video on YouTube and then they both discuss the video; such videos will be music videos, trailers for movies, videos about vacation destinations around the globe, and videos about culture in different countries). The section “Give a looong answer!” can also be updated so that the topics of the specific textbook being used by the class can be included for learners to converse/exchange voice-recorded messages about (with the necessary English phrases to do so also being included). Fourth, this section provides learners with a chance to record videos using their smart phones wherever they are (for example, at a fireworks display in Japan) and have them display on this page. The goal of this is to encourage learners to use English to update

their classmates about what is happening in their daily lives thereby adding more of a social element to their English learning and more deeply integrating English into their daily habits (at least with fellow classmates).

Image 8: “The Latest” in the “My Class” section



In regards to the “My Class” section, it may seem to aim to be used in place of an existing learning management system. This is not the case. First, existing systems may provide affordances for teachers to organize a course, offer the class schedule and learning content to learners, allow learners to submit and receive feedback on assessment items, and encourage learners’ online contributions and collaboration. This section of the LAMS, however, aims to do mostly only the last of what is listed above: encourage learners’ online contributions and collaboration. The researcher would argue that existing systems could go further in providing the kind of inspiring, social, and more fully integrated approach that an online tool for out-of-class use may require. The aim of “My Class” is, therefore, to do this. Second, given that the main objective of the “Globit - My English” profile page is to provide the learner with the opportunity to display data that he/she can use to self-promote, and potentially gain an edge, during the job-hunting process, a section such as “My Class” should be made available to provide further relevant data for that profile page. For example, the total number of conversations that the learner has with his/her study buddies will display in the “My Lifetime Achievements” sub-section on the learner’s “Globit - My English” page.

### How can it be integrated into a tertiary-level course?

Though the researcher has not yet done a formal study which focuses on integrating the LAMS into a tertiary-level course, he is planning to begin integrating it into his own classes in 2015. The literature reviewed earlier, and the researcher’s own reflections, would indicate that it could be done in the following manner. First, as Zou (2011) recommends, a piecemeal approach should be taken in order to *ease* learners into using the LAMS and into taking a more autonomous approach to their learning generally. Second, learners should be given clear and concise (and hopefully motivating) information about the LAMS before they attempt to use it. A handout serving this purpose could outline the goal of the LAMS, how it could help learners, how it would be integrated into the course, expectations, instructions, and how to get help. What should also be made clear to

learners is how the course textbook and the LAMS will work together. Third, time should be booked in a CALL (computer-assisted language learning) laboratory on campus so that the teacher can show the learners how to sign up, sign in, and use the LAMS. Fourth, it would make sense for learners to be asked to sit in the groups into which they were automatically assigned by the LAMS in regular classes and to do any in-class group work in those groups, thereby bringing the fun and competitive nature of “My Class” to the classroom. Fifth, once learners have started to use the LAMS regularly, time should be allocated in one or more lessons for them to ask for guidance. Finally, towards the end of the course, learners should be given an opportunity to share their experiences using the LAMS and also their reflections on its usefulness for them.

Integration of the LAMS would be suitable for most courses with a focus on English whether that be an English-conversation course, a reading course, or a CALL course. Conceivably, its integration into a CALL course could provide learners with a way of managing their overall process since no matter the type of CALL resource used, the learners could always self-reflect about the task that they had just completed using the LAMS. The key here is that doing so would add an extra layer of meaning for completing the task since not only would learners be doing it for the purposes of the CALL course itself, but also for the purposes of adding to their “Globit - My English” page. This could provide further motivation for completing course-mandated tasks.

What should be noted is the possibility that many learners may not own a personal computer and may therefore be more likely to seek to access the LAMS almost exclusively using their smart phone. Given this, the smart phone app that learners will use to contribute to the “My Class” page of their class and to interact with their “study buddy” will also contain a “Me” section that will allow them to perform the same functions they would using the “Me” section of web-based version of the LAMS using their smart phone.

### **How can a teacher use the LAMS for the purposes of a course focused on, for example, inter-cultural relations?**

For teachers of courses that may be taught *in* English and feature *an element* of English-language teaching and practice in them, but may focus mainly on content from other disciplines, such as inter-cultural relations or tourism/hospitality, the LAMS offers a number of features. First, the goal of the LAMS is to foster learners’ development as global communicators. This would seem to go hand-in-hand with such courses. Second, the ability to share English and lessons in the “My Class” section should be useful for learners in such courses since they could add content and links which had a specific inter-cultural focus. Third, learners should be somewhat motivated by the opportunity to add to their “Globit - My Global Identity” page since doing so could later give them an edge during job hunting (and to facilitate this, teachers could assign assessment items which involved the learners adding specific course-relevant data to their pages).

### **Does it address the theoretical and practical issues outlined earlier?**

The preceding sections provide an outline of what comprises the LAMS and how it could be integrated into a tertiary-level course. It should now be clear what it is that the researcher has attempted to design and develop - a set of online tools to encourage tertiary-level English-language learners to learn autonomously for

the ultimate purpose of preparing for the job hunting process. This researcher believes that through setting and achieving goals, regularly completing tasks, collaborating with others in their English class, and slowly filling out their profile pages across time using the LAMS, learners will not only continue achieving, but also maintain motivation since they will always have their ultimate goal in focus. Its adoption, success, and sustainability, however, may depend on the extent to which it addresses the theoretical and practical issues outlined earlier. The researcher believes that it does begin to do so. First, it aims to encourage learners to continue developing their language skills between/beyond educational institutions. Second, it provides affordances for at least those core aspects of learner autonomy cited earlier in the article (Sinclair, 2000, as cited in, Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012). Specifically, it should encourage learners to take on more responsibility for their own learning, various parts it may help to raise their conscious awareness of learning processes, it should encourage out-of-class autonomous behavior, and it provides a social aspect to autonomous learning. Third, it provides a personalized learner experience (Sluijs & Hover, 2009) by allowing learners to reflect on their language learning needs and by encouraging personal goal setting and achievement. Fourth, through goal setting and achieving, it allows learners to “make decisions based on past performance and future needs” and “identify their learning needs, plan their learning and monitor their progress” (Reinders & Hubbard, 2012, p. 361), as this type of technology should. Fifth, the inclusion of the “Globit” pages may promote learner engagement in personal learning processes (Altimari, Plastina, Cronin, & Caria, 2013) since they are encouraged to self-reflect about their language learning needs (and this will not happen just once) in order to maximize their eventual appeal on those pages, and the inclusion of the “My Class” section may promote increased enthusiasm for using online tools out of class (Dogoriti, 2014). Sixth, because of its design, it promotes teacher and learner agency (Blin, Caws, Hamel, Heift, Schulze, & Smith, 2013) and has been designed to be easy to use and update (Kern, 2013). Finally, the ultimate goal of the LAMS is to help learners to slowly fill out their “Globit” pages across time so as to prepare for job hunting. Beyond being for the purpose of securing future employment, this providing of such an ultimate and overarching long-term task for English-language learning at the tertiary level would seem to be minimally restrictive. The “Globit” pages are an expression of the learner’s own individuality and the learner is free to go about the task of learning in whatever ways that he/she pleases, with the choice of long-term goals, tasks, and resources being based on the learner’s own preferences. The learner is also free to fill out and use the Globit pages in whatever ways that he/she sees fit. This would seem to speak to the idea that learner autonomy should not only encompass motivating learners to take on more responsibility for their own learning, but also providing them with the means through which to come to a fuller appreciation of who they are, where they are going, and how they are going to use English as a tool to get themselves there.

At this early stage, part of the purpose of this article has been to introduce the LAMS so that researchers and teachers may begin to familiarize themselves with it. Necessarily, questions will be raised and the process of “evaluating, modifying, evaluating” referred to earlier will continue. However, I may be able to partially answer two potential questions in advance. One such question may relate to verifiability. That is, though easily verifiable measures of learner proficiency which have proven validity and reliability, such as TOEIC and TOEFL scores, will feature on the “Globit - My English” page, how useful could the other indicators on the page be particularly if they may not be verifiable? For example, if the learner regularly completes tasks in the “Me” section, the total number of tasks completed will display in the “My Lifetime Achievements” sub-section

of the “Globit - My English” page. Can this indicator be verified by an interested party, such as a company representative during the recruitment process? To a certain extent only (that is, using the word and phrase quiz percentage), but that should not distract from the importance of this indicator. As outlined by Sinclair (2000, as cited in, Borg and Al-Busaidi, 2012), two core aspects of learner autonomy involve the learner being willing to take on more responsibility for his/her own learning and that such autonomy be exercised outside of class. To encourage this, it is essential that the learner is able to see that his/her efforts translate into achievement (however small on any one occasion), that such achievements mean something, and that such achievements may accumulate across time to be used during the job hunting process. To provide the kind of achievement types that learners find meaningful (e.g. read a short news article and study a new phrase and some new words contained in the article and add them to his/her collection in the LAMS), the inclusion of indicators which may not be easily verifiable has been necessary (e.g. the learner’s tasks completed number increases by one). This need not pose a problem since it is likely to be the well-established and easily verifiable measures of learner proficiency, such as TOEIC and TOEFL scores, that will draw the attention of most interested parties first and foremost. The remaining indicators (e.g. the number of tasks completed, details about the learner’s study-abroad trips, details about contests entered) may be used to provide a more qualitative dimension, indicating the learner’s degree of interest in, and motivation for, English-language learning, the effort that he/she has gone to in order to progress, the range and types of English-related experiences that he/she has had - and perhaps therefore - who the learner is as a person and candidate for employment. Having said that, learners will be encouraged (and perhaps eventually required) to provide concrete evidence (e.g. photos, certificates, letters, and links to web pages) to support even these more qualitative indicators. It may be this that discourages learners from fabricating self-data so that companies can come to rely on the profile pages as a valid source of information (however, companies will also need to do their due diligence).

Another question may relate to the extent to which companies may be prepared to change their culture and habits so that the showing of profile pages like the Globit pages by candidates could become an integral part of the recruitment process. This is not a question that can be easily answered at this time. However, it will be essential for any effort to familiarize companies with the pages to include a clear outline of what benefits the accessing of such pages could have for those companies. Such benefits are sure to include: (1) the fact that such pages would provide companies with a more complete picture of who the candidate is as an English-language user and learner (since the pages will display the learner’s proficiency test scores *and* the more qualitative indicators); and (2) the fact that such data could be made available to the company if the candidate is hired as a means to track his/her ongoing progress with English at the company. A slightly more sophisticated version of the “Globit - My English” profile page will be offered to working-age learners to help them track their progress from when they secure their first job until they retire. The benefit to learners will be that allowing their companies to be privy to such data could facilitate the process of receiving bonuses and pay increases, and securing promotions. Beyond this, it should also facilitate the process of securing future jobs.

## Conclusion

In this article, a set of online tools developed by the current researcher for the purpose of encouraging learning autonomy (a “learner autonomy management system” - LAMS) at the tertiary level in Japan was introduced.

No data which can attest to the pedagogical effectiveness of the LAMS can as yet be reported. However, this will be the subject of future experimental research. In addition, the researcher will continue to engage with the literature to further refine the design, functionality, and content of all aspects of the LAMS so that it may go further in addressing the theoretical and practical issues outlined earlier, and so that the adoption, success, and sustainability of it can be maximized.

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