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1 Introduction to Language Learning and Leisure

Abstract: The introduction to *Language Learning and Leisure* provides two reviews of the literature in this area, overviewing first the field to date and second the contributions to the book itself. We begin with a short etymologically-based explanation of the choice of title of the book and a brief history of the genesis of the volume. The review of the field to date examines literature touching on informal or leisure-related language acquisition since the early examples in the 1980's and 90's. It analyses past publications according to five categories: what informal language learners do, where they do it, the prevalence of English, what is learnt (language development) and the relationship of informal and leisure learning to other types of learning. The presentation of the contributing chapters follows the organisation of the book, presenting the nature of informal second language learning and informal second language learning research, research into language outcomes, learner activities and strategies, psychological dimensions of informal second language learning and more specifically engagement.

Keywords: informal second language learning, leisure, informal practices, informal environments, learner activities, online / digital learning, English vs. other languages, language development, learning outcomes, review of the field

1 Introduction

The Liddell and Scott Greek lexicon¹ offers several insights into the origins of the word *leisure* (σχολή – *schole*). The primary descriptions offered (leisure, rest, idleness) seem, at first glance, to somewhat contrast with the secondary descriptions given (that in which leisure is employed, learned discussion, disputation, lecture . . . a group to whom lectures are given, school). It is interesting indeed that “school” should appear as an example of a place of leisure. However, considering the full

1 <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.04.0057:entry=sxolh/>

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spectrum of this lexicon entry we may infer the journey from “leisure” to “school” more clearly: time allowing for rest or idleness also allows for intellectual activity, which may lead to discussing ideas, rhetorical debate, the development of philosophies and worldviews, which over time may become sufficiently sophisticated so as to be associated with a physical place: a school. That the primary and secondary descriptions strike us as incongruent serves as a reminder that in the present age, school is most often thought of in the category of work and that intellectual undertakings are assumed to be distinct from relaxation and leisure.

One of Liddell and Scott’s references in Plato’s *Laws* finds Clinias and the Athenian discussing the study of physical sciences and mathematics in the following terms:

Athenian: People should be setting problems like these for one another, competing in activities that are valuable to them, a much more refined pastime (σχολή – *scholē: leisure*) for old men than draughts.

Clinias: No doubt. After all there is not a great deal of difference between draughts and these subjects. (Paraphrased from *Laws* 7:820:c-d)²

While a leisure pursuit such as draughts may be helpful for certain mathematical reasoning skills, the central reflection of this book will be on the affordances of leisure activities for second language learning. With the relationship between study and play as a starting point for a collection of chapters on language learning and leisure, it may be helpful to keep in mind the following questions: Philosophically, to what extent are leisure and schooling, free time and learning, all part of the same system? How do listening to music, watching videos or playing video games – widespread leisure activities for many young people today – contribute to the process of developing an additional language?

The study of informal involvement with additional languages has emerged as a relevant area of research within SLA. With the rapid development and spread of internet-based technologies, contact with foreign languages outside the classroom has become commonplace, even for learners who cannot study abroad and may never have travelled. While this contact can take multiple forms, online contents are a major driving force because they present learners with unprecedented opportunities for exposure to and use of target languages, regardless of their physical location. The literature concerning informal language learning has grown substantially over the past decade and in 2018 an inaugural conference was organized by Henriette Arndt and Christina Lyrigkou at the University of Oxford entitled (*In*) *formal L2 learning: Integrating informal practices into formal contexts*. This first gathering of researchers was followed by a symposium at the AILA 2021 World

2 <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0166%3Abook%3D7>

Congress of Applied Linguistics, *Learning through leisure: Informal L2 learning in the 21st century*. Serving as a venue for discussions on the current state of the field, the symposium also acted as a catalyst for the creation of this book.

As research in this area has grown over the past decade, so too has the variety of labels used to describe informal involvement with languages. Readers may be familiar, for example, with Online Informal Learning of English (OILE), Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE) or Extramural English (EE). For the present volume we have chosen Informal Second Language Learning (ISLL), initially coined by Henriette Arndt (2019), as an umbrella term for these different varieties, each of which examines informal language usage from a particular perspective or within a certain context. OILE, IDLE and EE, for example, all identify phenomena linked specifically to the learning of English. In addition, OILE and IDLE are restricted to digital environments while EE includes both face-to-face interactions as well as the use of traditional media. In any collection of studies from a wide variety of contexts, such as here, it is important to be as terminologically inclusive as possible. Therefore, broader notions of learning “out of class” or “beyond the classroom”, which may offer a more substantial role for teacher-suggested activities, also have their place in some of the studies presented under the ISLL umbrella. Nonetheless, the central idea of learning through leisure, suggesting learner agency and enjoyment in exploring the affordances of materials not specifically designed for learning, should be kept in mind when taking this collection as a whole.

In the following pages, we will present two overviews: firstly of informal second language learning in general, including its historical developments and some of its more significant publications; secondly of the chapters included in this volume, explaining the rationale behind the groupings and order of inclusion.

2 Overview of the field

A review of previous ISLL literature will give insights into the current state of research in the field. Since non-native speakers around the world increasingly have access to their additional languages through online leisure content and interactions, researchers who may have limited their study of SLA to the classroom in the past are now expanding their realm of investigation beyond the formal sphere. However, we would be remiss to assume that studies on language learning in leisure contexts are limited to this recent wave of research. For example, Spada (1986) compared informal interactive contact in an ESL context, such as

conversations, with purely receptive exposure, such as watching television programs. She found that the informal interactive contact correlated to greater speaking fluency and improvement in grammatical fluency, especially when the interactions took place in multiple contexts. Within an EFL context, Pickard (1996) queried German L1 secondary students on their out-of-class activities and found that they favoured reading and listening activities as opposed to production activities such as speaking and writing. They also selected their activities based on personal preference rather than on teacher recommendation. Murphy (2005) investigated adult French, German & Spanish learners' exposure to their target languages outside of class and inventoried the activities they engaged in. She also noted students' tendency to focus on meaning as opposed to form during their usage events, as well as some students' wishes for more easily accessible content in the L2. Murphy concluded by affirming the role of informal activities as a "recognised and valued aspect of study" (2005: 311). Finally, Murray (2008) reported on the language learning stories of adult Japanese EFL learners who eventually became intermediate to advanced level English users. Through their life narratives, participants underscored the prominent role that popular culture played in their language development outside of the classroom.

While it is clear that informal language learning has been studied in the past, in the last 10–15 years it has become an area of research in its own right, with an increasing number of both publications and thematic strands in conferences appearing each year across the globe. Its propulsion can largely be attributed to the proliferation of broadband internet access as well as the arrival and growth of mobile technologies.

The major preoccupations of ISLL research will be reviewed briefly in the following pages. These may be categorised as what informal learners do and how they do it (activities, practices, habits, strategies, techniques, sources and usage), where they do it (informal landscapes, contexts, environments), the place of English (as related to other languages), the nature of the language development that ensues and the relationship between informal and other learning contexts.

2.1 What informal learners do and how they do it

Activities, practices, habits, sources and usage all touch on language users' involvement with the L2. These terms may refer to a certain type of activity (gaming, viewing films, series or videos, reading, social networking, writing fan fiction, listening to music, etc.) or the nature of that activity (productive, receptive, oral, written). Much of the initial research into ISLL sought to inventory these different activities and observe patterns such as the predominance of receptive over productive

activities, frequency of activity use or the occurrence of informal usage profiles (Sundqvist 2009; Toffoli and Sockett 2010; Kusyik 2017).

Early ISLL research identified a broad range of informal practices as well as high frequencies of usage, alerting researchers to the arrival of a genuine phenomenon rather than just the favored pastimes of certain enthusiastic outliers. These initial findings also revealed a wide variety of informal user profiles and activity preferences, foreshadowing the complexity involved in investigating ISLL and its myriad variables. Current ISLL research may now shift its focus to the numerous individual pathways taken by learners on their L2 usage journeys. Toffoli (2020) began to examine this in association with several individual difference variables and continues that exploration in her chapter here. Important insights have also been offered by Sundqvist and Sylvén's (2016: 139) EE House, illustrating differing levels of effort involved in different activities, or Muñoz's (2020) study of the activities predominantly engaged in according to gender.

What informal learners do may also touch on individual practices, habits and usage – terms that have been used in the literature to refer to techniques or strategies employed by users in order to take charge of or influence their own learning. Much of this can be found under the label of, or in relation to, the concept of autonomy (Chan 2016, Hyland 2004, Lyriqkou 2019, Toffoli 2020). Some research has focused specifically on diversity of activities as an indicator of how such learners proceed (Ibatova 2019, Lee 2019a). Lai & Gu (2011) found that participants in their study “reported using a variety of technologies selectively to fulfill various learning purposes and needs at different stages of their learning” (326). Another example examining the “hows” of ISLL is provided by Ibrahim et al (2014) who found that “powerful shared intentions and thoughts guide actions, shared practice and sociocultural mediation” (29) in the strategic use of web-based material by 400 Indonesian university students to advance their English-language proficiency. Sundqvist & Sylvén (2014) have looked specifically at the self-reported strategies of digital gamers as related to speaking English. The complexity of how users avail themselves of the affordances provided by authentic L2 materials outside the classroom is only beginning to be explored in detail and this book will provide several examples that examine these individual differences further.

2.2 Where they do it

Research on ISLL has been conducted in many countries, including Austria (Trinder 2017; Schwarz 2020), Brazil (Cole and Vanderplank 2016), China (Lai 2017) Denmark (Hannibal Jensen 2016), France (Sockett 2014; Kusyik 2017; Yibokou 2019; Toffoli 2020), Germany (Kusyik 2017; Arndt 2019), Greece (Lyriqkou 2019), Hong Kong (Benson

2015), Kazakhstan (Zodorozhnyy 2022), Morocco (Dressman 2020), New Zealand (Alm 2015), Norway (Brevik 2019), Slovenia (Jurkovič 2019), South Korea (Lee 2019b; Pooley, Midgley and Farley 2019) and Sweden (Sundqvist 2009). While geographic location determines certain aspects of usage (internet quality or restrictions, explicit or implicit censorship, digital practices within communities), other locational terms are more conceptual than purely geographical, such as *landscape*, *ecology* or *environment*. The notion of environment is helpful in suggesting that informal practices occur in a system of exposure and interactions unique to each learner. From an ecological perspective, this personalized environment is not isolated but rather in constant interaction and overlap with other areas of the learner's routines, surroundings and community (Godwin-Jones 2019). Some researchers have taken a complex and dynamic systems view of informal L2 development and accordingly characterise the process of learning as navigation through a landscape of attractor and repeller states (states that the L2 system gravitates towards and resists, respectively, sometimes visualized metaphorically as valleys and hills – Kusyk 2017; Godwin-Jones 2018; Toffoli 2020). Finally, the different states of a system and the system's corresponding behavior may be influenced by the location or context, such as work, school or home, in which they are played out (Benson 2021).

The notion of place also underlies a variety of individual preferences. Many learners view informal learning as an opportunity to be alone in their own private worlds, even when surrounded by others on public transport for example. Others see informal activities as taking place in essentially social spaces where games are played together, media are shared and even viewing is discussed with friends. Virtual space has increasingly become a focus of study alongside that of physical space in language learning. Lamb and Murray's (2018) review of space, place and autonomy, and Benson's (2021) in-depth examination of spatial perspectives in SLA go some way to developing an understanding of how *spaces with the potential for learning* (such as public transportation with cell-phone connectivity) become *places for learning* (that is, places which learners target as functional for learning) as L2 users inhabit and travel through them, transforming and individualising them.

2.3 Why English and what about other languages?

The specificities of particular languages in relation to informal learning are another key dimension of this field of research. Indeed, the widespread geographical influence of English and its economic and socio-political role in global affairs have also endowed it with a predominant cultural role throughout most of the world through music, audio-visual and other media. This means that much research into informal

language learning relates to English. In the growing field of vlogging, leading YouTube channels such as *PewDiePie* or *Nikki Tutorials* are produced in English by highly proficient second language users (in this case Swedish and Dutch vloggers). Other languages with a strong cultural presence in the media, such as Japanese (Manga, Anime) or Korean (K-pop, K-dramas), have received attention (Armour and Iida 2016), while Spanish, in particular through the popularity of Telenovelas, is also an area of interest (Lerner 2013). Sundqvist (2020) mentions the learning of French, German, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Russian and Norwegian via informal and leisure-related activities.

Some studies that focus on languages other than English (Scholz 2017 and Vosburg 2017 for learning German; Silva and Brougère 2017 or Peters et al. 2019 for French), tend to be characterised by greater teacher involvement and may indeed even lean towards the category of formal learning using authentic documents. In the present volume, the majority of chapters concern English, but Japanese (Inaba), French (Cajka et al.) and German (Alm, Cajka et al.) are also studied as target languages. Although these examples may involve teacher-suggested or teacher-initiated activities, they aim to foster learner autonomy directly, acting as bridging activities that both connect classroom learners to the world beyond and bring authentic L2 usage habits into the formal sphere.

When viewed through the prism of individual preferences, the role of English as compared to other languages again reveals disparity. The mediating role of English to help negotiate the “linguistic distance” (Muñoz 2018) between two other languages was also acknowledged by Sockett (2014), whose informants reported learning some English when viewing Korean series with English subtitles, when subtitles in their own language did not exist. In this volume, Inaba explores the mediating role of English for Swedish learners of Japanese. Other individual choices can be observed with regard to captions and subtitling, for example, varying subtitle choice based on the type of show, viewing context or level of fatigue on a given day, as mentioned by Lyriqkou, Yibokou, Inaba and Alm in the present volume.

2.4 What they learn

As the term suggests, *Informal Second Language Learning* implies some kind of link between exposure to a target language and its subsequent development. It is therefore unsurprising that many studies have sought to investigate, characterise and quantify informal L2 users’ language development. While measurement of language learning in a classroom setting may offer a degree of certainty and control for researchers, measuring development from informal contexts is challenging for

a range of reasons, not least of which being that each learner is exposed to a unique range of inputs and interactions over a potentially long period of time and that they carry out their activities in private contexts.

Answering the question “why do some informal L2 users appear to learn more than others?” will likely be a focus of research into ISLL for many years to come. Indeed, this question is at the heart of the exploration of individual differences undertaken in this book. The contributions here do not study individual differences merely to see how different people develop the same skills, but more importantly to examine why so many develop them only partially and in such different ways. To be sure, these questions have been at the heart of SLA research since enquiry into the good language learner came to prominence nearly half a century ago (Naiman 1975). A complex range of internal and external factors means that each learner develops differently and recent studies have sought to explore this issue. For example, Kusyk’s (2017) longitudinal case study revealed highly individualized learning trajectories and fluctuating levels of development with regard to informal learners’ L2 complexity, accuracy and fluency. Other studies have aimed to identify the impact of factors such as time on task and opportunity to communicate on language development (Las Vergnas 2017), while Arndt (2019), Peng, Jager and Lowie (2021) and Lee (2022) have sought to develop models to express the relative impacts of a variety of individual factors on informal learning outcomes. Different chapters in this volume pay specific attention to engagement (Arndt, Sockett, Alm), grit and L2 enjoyment (Liu and Lee), beliefs and identities (Zadorozhnyy and Yu) and autonomy, competence and attachment (Toffoli).

2.5 Relationship to other forms of learning

As many individuals carry double L2 identities – those of both informal and classroom learners – the question of the relationship between formal and informal learning inevitably presents itself. While circumstances exist where there is little shared interface between the two realms (for example Cole and Vanderplank 2016), many teachers are confronted with an ever-growing number of students who are exposed to and interact with the L2 in their free time (Godwin-Jones 2019; Moffat 2022). Though some teachers appear to be unaware of the extent to which their students participate in informal activities (Toffoli and Sockett 2015), or even doubt the potential of such input for L2 development (see Zadorozhnyy and Yu, this volume), others seek out such activities and attempt to build bridges between the two spheres (Nunan and Richards 2015). The teacher’s role in informal learning could be conceptualized along a scale of involvement, ranging from expressing general statements that acknowledge informal practices, to encouraging or inciting students to engage

with them, to providing concrete suggestions or demonstrating how to use certain resources. Other approaches may include efforts to integrate informal practice or informal content into the classroom itself, including through bridging activities (Thorne and Reinhardt 2008; Reinhardt and Ryu 2013). For terminological clarity within the field, however, researchers and teachers should specify where the notional boundary between formal, non-formal³ and informal is to be placed when designing their research or teaching scenarios (see Alm’s reflection on “intraformal” in this volume).

In some cases, activities prescribed by teachers may resemble those which learners either already engage in of their own volition or could choose to engage in for pleasure. However, the learner’s approach to viewing a video or playing an online game when asked to do so by a teacher is likely to be more form-focused, while doing this as a leisure activity usually implies a focus on meaning. There may also be (positive or negative) affective consequences to teacher-initiated activities, as suggested by Lee and Drajati (2019) and taken up in Liu and Lee’s chapter in this volume.

Some researchers have questioned whether informal activities involving authentic materials (for example video tutorials about economics) and non-formal activities (learning applications such as Babbel or Duolingo) are similar enough in nature to be studied as a single phenomenon (Lai 2017). This question reflects the debate around the deliberate or incidental nature of informal learning. It is clearly possible to use materials from an informal context as learning resources, as every teacher has done when using authentic documents. The issue is to what extent this is done in an explicit attempt to learn the target language, or whether the focus of most informal activities, as suggested by the title of this book, is leisure. In the case of the latter, language acquisition resulting from the activity would seemingly be characterized as incidental, a by-product of understanding the contents of the materials involved. Alternatively, if ISLL can predominantly be described as a deliberate approach to self-directed autonomous learning, then it may be relevant to consider it alongside the use of non-formal learning applications. Kusyik extensively explores such questions related to the nature of learning in ISLL in her contribution here.

Many researchers in this field are also language teachers or teacher trainers, and as such, may observe the impact of the informal on the formal in daily classroom interactions. As mentioned above, informal activities may be targeted, suggested or encouraged by teachers as a means to improve the learners’ L2. Current

³ A framework designed for learning that takes place outside the classroom, such as a sports club, or, from an ISLL perspective, mobile applications specifically designed for language learning.

literature also suggests that the focus of contemporary formal L2 learning should be to facilitate access to the world of informal practices awaiting the learner at the end of their school day or academic degree (Sockett 2020; Toffoli 2020; Toffoli this volume; Alm this volume).

Whichever perspective is most resonant for a particular reader, it is clear that the influential role of a foreign language in the leisure activities of informal language learners represents an opportunity which teachers of other subjects – wishing that their students would engage with mathematics or geography content “for fun” in their free time – can only dream of.

3 Overview of the chapters

In the context of the overview presented above, this book begins by seeking to understand what is meant by informal learning. The three chapters under the heading “Nature of ISLL and ISLL research” are therefore an ideal starting point to situate ISLL within a range of theoretical and methodological perspectives in social science research.

3.1 The nature of ISLL and ISLL research

Mark Dressman’s chapter “Toward an Anthropology of Informal Digital Learning of English” invites the reader to take up the tools of anthropology in order to develop the qualitative study of informal language learning, obtaining “thick” descriptions of individual practices in the field. It explores the epistemological positioning of ISLL research and argues for the use of qualitative approaches. Dressman details six qualities of ethnographic research that can be central to IDLE inquiries and proposes justifications for what many consider its weaknesses. Finally, he indicates how general knowledge can be constructed from this type of narrative. The chapter contains helpful methodological examples from the author’s own experiences in Morocco. The reader will find several further examples of such qualitative approaches in chapters 7–10, 12–13, 15 and 16.

Meryl Kusyk’s reflection “Does informal mean implicit? Exploring the nature of ISLL” offers a cognitivist foray into the essence of informal language learning itself. It presents a comprehensive overview of the constructs of implicit, explicit and incidental learning, before delving into the literature on five current denominations of ISLL (Online Informal Learning of English, Extramural English, etc.). The learning constructs are then juxtaposed with the ISLL varieties in an attempt

to identify which type(s) of learning may be most prominent within each variety. Kussyk advocates for greater emphasis both on terminological clarity and the nature of the informal learning process, which she claims to be essential in this still emerging field.

In chapter 4, Robert Godwin-Jones focuses on the technological dimensions of ISLL, examining how recent advances such as Intelligent Personal Assistants (IPAs) can become part of the new and ever-changing terrain of informal additional language development. Giving detailed explanations of the affordances of these new technologies, he analyses their potential to meet both language acquisition and communication needs and situates them with regard to different theoretical SLA frameworks. Godwin-Jones reviews several studies where aspects of these intelligent technologies were tested with learners and examines the relevance and feasibility of future developments that have been suggested in the literature.

3.2 Language outcomes

The broad question of language outcomes is key to SLA-focused informal learning studies. Beyond viewing ISLL as a series of interesting activities in a variety of foreign languages, seeking to measure what may and may not be learned informally is a difficult but essential endeavour. Two important examinations of outcomes related to speaking are presented in these chapters. Christina Lyriqkou's study of pragmatic development, in particular discourse markers (DM), is a welcome addition to a field which has often focused on lexical acquisition as the primary outcome of informal exposure. Through the study of DM acquisitions, Lyriqkou also returns to the intentional/incidental and explicit/implicit debates analysed by Kussyk, bringing persuasive examples to illustrate her arguments. In common with Yibokou's chapter, which follows, Lyriqkou looks at the extent to which the orality of informal exposure can be detected in the language learners' speech.

Kossi Seto Yibokou's study of the influence of informal exposure on pronunciation also fills a long-standing gap in ISLL research. Returning first to a long-time hotly-debated topic among phoneticians as to whether media-viewing influences accent, he then studies ten specific markers of General American and Received Pronunciation British accents in learner speech. Like Lyriqkou and others, he also compares his results with learners' declared informal activities to seek potential relationships between practices and language outcomes. His overall findings highlight the large degree of variability in pronunciation on both an inter and intra-individual basis. For those researchers who adhere to a complex, dynamic systems approach to learning, these findings underscore the relevance of such a perspective.

3.3 Learner activities and strategies

Including research which does not relate exclusively to digital or online learning allows space for studies which take place within physical mobility contexts such as study abroad or migration, yet the nature of modern life is such that digital media interactions are inevitably present even in these circumstances. Chapters 7 through 10 offer examples of how learners go about their informal language development, examining both the strategies they employ and, in the cases of chapters 7 and 10, the importance of both physical and technological contexts.

In chapter 7, Phil Benson analyses the space through which informal learners move in a study-abroad context, offering insights into physical mobility rather than only the virtual mobility which so often characterises informal learning research. Following students around virtually in their daily geographical routines brings to light the particular difficulties international students face when seeking to maximise and seize L2 affordances, even in an environment that is assumed to be a linguistic immersion experience. Benson specifically addresses the question of leisure activities and finds that study-abroad students often lack the time and opportunities for leisure that may be more available to study-at-home students. The role that digital media takes on in the maintenance of contact with native languages and friends and families “back home”, as well as the specific applications that are used for navigating life in a foreign country are quite different from those used by learners of the same language in at-home (EFL) learning contexts. As such, this study widens the scope of ISLL research to include the particular experience of the informal language learner abroad.

In chapter 8, Marlene Schwarz explores in detail how adolescent learners of English in Vienna approach vocabulary acquisition through ISLL. Via a series of in-depth group interviews, she focuses on learners’ voices as they explain what vocabulary they pay attention to (or not), the strategies that they employ for comprehension and retention and how the new vocabulary from informal sources interfaces with that encountered in school. Beyond bringing significant new insights to ISLL, this study also points to new directions for studies in vocabulary acquisition, indicating qualitative methodologies for emic insights into learner experience as a necessary complement to more traditional quantitative research.

Miho Inaba’s chapter (9) “Mediation in L2-related activities outside of the classroom: Case studies of learners of Japanese” invites the reader to use the lens of activity theory to understand learning outside the classroom. This perspective focuses more closely on the mediating artefacts which are at the heart of ISLL. The examples offered are drawn from five Swedish learners of Japanese and show the use of images from Mangas or Japanese-language subtitles from Anime as examples of such mediating artefacts. Of particular interest is the mediating

role of a proficient L2 (in this case English) for the learning of a more linguistically distant L3 (Japanese).

In chapter 10, Stefanie Cajka, Ed Griffiths, Nikolay Slavkov and Eva Vetter, like Benson, also examine immersion and semi-immersion study contexts, and, like the other authors in this section, also examine *how* learners go about their out-of-class language learning, specifically addressing risk-taking and enlarging the scope of self-initiated risks. To do so they report on the development and use of a pedagogical initiative to encourage risk-taking for language development. The concept of physical and virtual mobility is taken one step further as the creation and implementation of a mobile application for student self-management of their own language risk-taking is explored. Their description of the iterative process of research and development to create the application itself reveals a particular attention to inclusion of learner perspectives. The project also highlights the nature of bridging activities that can be created to instigate engagement and life-long practices with additional languages.

3.4 Psychological dimensions

Varieties of context as well as both individual and social factors lead to the multifaceted manifestations of ISLL. This means both variability in learning outcomes, as seen in chapters 5 and 6 and in techniques and practices, as seen in chapters 7 through 10. In the remaining chapters, we will see how individual difference variables such as learner identity, motivation, autonomy, enjoyment, grit and engagement intrinsically differentiate learners from each other and how these differences impact their L2 learning. Chapters 14 through 16 specifically investigate the construct of engagement as it relates to additional language development in the informal sphere.

In chapter 11, Linlin Liu and Ju Seong Lee examine the relations between IDLE, enjoyment of the process of learning the target language and grit, which can be seen as the persistence necessary to continue the learning process. Working with data from 656 freshman students in mainland China, the authors take a quantitative approach to testing three hypotheses. Using Structural Equation Modelling, they demonstrate that L2 enjoyment in general mediated the relationship between IDLE and grit, but that classroom L2 enjoyment did not play such a mediating role. Their results suggest that EFL learners tend to exert more effort in learning English when their L2 enjoyment is enhanced through practice using IDLE activities. This positive link between IDLE and grit may indicate that learners who engage in IDLE more frequently are more likely to remain passionate and persist in learning and mastering the English language. It may also give some

indications to teachers as to how to encourage language acquisition through enjoyable leisure activities in the target language.

In chapter 12, Artem Zadorozhnyy and Baohua Yu work specifically with the unique population of informal learners training to be language teachers in Kazakhstan. While their results support many existing findings concerning learners improving their English using informal sources, they also uncover surprising contradictions in how some future teachers regard (or minimise) the importance of these activities for language development. Zadorozhnyy and Yu point to elements concerning teacher beliefs and ISLL, which should undoubtedly be addressed in L2 teacher training programmes, not just for English nor in central Asia alone.

Using a self-determination theory framework which she links to other psychological theories, Denyze Toffoli (chapter 13) examines articulations between several individual difference indicators linked to motivation (principally autonomy, attachment, self-direction and existing language skills) and learners' individual trajectories through the irregular (metaphorical) landscape of ISLL. She looks closely at the learning paths of nine students learning English in France and attempts to identify more general profiles of informal language learners, while recognising the eminently personal aspect of each of these trajectories.

3.5 Engagement

Henriette Arndt's work (chapter 14), introduces the construct of engagement, giving a thorough review of the literature in this area and enriching the three traditional vectors of cognitive, behavioural and affective engagement with a fourth, linguistic engagement. The latter can be seen as what has elsewhere been identified as "focus-on-form". Using a large-scale mixed-methods study Arndt examines the nature of these engagement dimensions with secondary school learners of English in Germany and teases out the different ways in which the four dimensions interact with each other. Her findings attest to the highly variable nature of engagement in ISLL even in a relatively homogenous population.

Geoffrey Sockett (chapter 15), also refers to the engagement construct to study how French university learners of English did or did not modify their practices of ISLL during the first Covid-19 lockdown. He sees the instances of such change as pivotal "phase transitions" in the dynamic system of additional language development. However, where Arndt distinguishes between cognitive and linguistic engagement, Sockett conflates the two and adds a social engagement dimension. His findings confirm both the relevance of engagement as a conceptual tool for understanding ISLL and, once again, the variability present in all such studies of individual differences.

In chapter 16, Antonie Alm also looks specifically at the role of engagement in the language learning process and introduces the notion of “willingness to engage.” In contrast to the previous two authors, she analyses the learning of German by native English speakers, through an examination of how two very different students engage with Netflix. Finally, she defines a notion of *intraformal* learning, based on the satisfaction of the three basic needs of self-determination theory (autonomy, competence and relatedness) as a means to reconcile teacher-initiated pedagogy with learner-engaged activities. She sees such *intraformal* learning as a new “pedagogy of wellbeing” whose finality, rather than simply measurable additional language development, would be personal growth. In this, Alm seems to deconstruct the duality between formal and informal learning, situating the ultimate purpose of all learning in a lifelong and lifewide dimension that far exceeds the practicalities of communication, to enhance the self of the learner.

4 Conclusion

As the field of Informal Second Language Learning continues on its trajectory, new questions, themes and challenges are sure to arise. No longer in the early stages of ISLL research where findings overwhelmingly focused on activity type and frequency of use, this volume underscores issues such as methodological and theoretical approaches, the nature of informal learning, language learning outcomes, learning strategies and techniques and individual difference variables. Although the chapters have been grouped thematically, they do not represent a linear path and the reader could profitably approach them in order of preference. As editors, we hope that your reading will be a leisurely stroll deeper into the world of ISLL.

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