

Conference Name: XJTU Symposium ‘Flying Solo: Fostering Learner Autonomy’

Date: June 2023

Presenter: Jin Zhang

This report covers three aspects of the symposium: an introduction, highlights, and my reflections. The School of Languages at XJTU hosted the June 2023 Symposium, focusing on learner autonomy and developments in this practice within language learning. Professor Don Snow from Duke Kunshan University delivered the plenary talk, joined by Professor Nobuko Saito from Oberlin University, Professor Jane Arnold from the University of Seville, Professor Cai Wei from the University of Calgary, Dr. Sihan Zhou from The Chinese University of Hong Kong, and Miaki Nagasaka from the Japanese-Language Institution.

Dr. Snow emphasized integrating language learning stories into independent language learning (ILL). He argued that successful language acquisition requires students to engage in ILL, where learning strategies should be coupled with narratives to optimize outcomes. However, students often replicate course-based language learning (CBLL) strategies in ILL, hindering their progress. He posited that independent learners must adopt distinct approaches from CBLL, necessitating greater decision-making and sustained motivation.

To support this, Dr. Snow suggested training learners to design effective, sustainable learning plans involving goal-setting, material selection, and strategy implementation. He highlighted that stories provide context and motivation, setting realistic expectations for authentic language learning and helping students establish their ideal L2 self. Furthermore, stories enhance retention of learning methods and strategies.

I believe the benefits of using stories in the classroom are significant and worth implementing. One approach could be encouraging students to create independent language learning plans and document their stories throughout the semester. At the term's end, students could present their stories in various formats, allowing them to track their learning progress while sharing authentic experiences with peers.

In addition to Dr. Snow's talk, several presentations focused on ChatGPT and modern technologies, showing how these tools can facilitate autonomous language learning. As technology rapidly changes the educational landscape, educators must familiarize themselves with new tools that can enhance learning and adapt to evolving roles.

