A Phenomenological Study of Learner Autonomy in Less Commonly Taught Languages
(Swahili)

A dissertation presented to
the faculty of
The Patton College of Education
In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Patrick O. Mose
December 2016
© 2016 Patrick O. Mose. All Rights Reserved.
This dissertation titled

A Phenomenological Study of Learner Autonomy in Less Commonly Taught Languages

(Swahili)

by

PATRICK O. MOSE

has been approved for

the Department of Educational Studies

and The Patton College of Education by

David Richard Moore

Professor of Educational Studies

Renée A. Middleton

Dean, The Patton College of Education
Abstract

MOSE, PATRICK O., Ph.D., December 2016, Instructional Technology, Educational Studies

A Phenomenological Study of Learner Autonomy in Less Commonly Taught Languages (Swahili)

Director of Dissertation: David Richard Moore

Learner autonomy is a fundamental phenomenon in the teaching and learning of languages. The growth of digital technology and the Internet appears to have changed the manifestation of learner autonomy, particularly in Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTLs). The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to examine the experiences of LCTL instructors and students by discussing how LCTL instructors and students describe the phenomenon of learner autonomy, investigating what strategies are perceived to promote learner autonomy in LCTLs and report on how to create more opportunities for promoting learner autonomy. The researcher applied a qualitative phenomenological approach to gather and analyze data through memoing and interviewing nine participants. Three themes emerged from the data: description of learner autonomy; authentic language-learning experiences; and strategies for promoting learner autonomy. Overall, motivation, authentic experiences, and use of technology were identified to play a vital role in promoting learner autonomy. Data generated from this study lead to recommendations for utilizing personalized instructional design principles for learning that allows language learners to collaborate using technology tools that promote engagement, create an authentic language-learning environment for language
learners, and exploiting iPedagogy opportunities presented by the 21st century technological tools that foster autonomy and encourage learner control.
This dissertation is dedicated to my late father Zephaniah Mose who longed to receive me back with a Ph.D. but passed on a day after my defense, my late brother Kennedy Mose, late sister Elizabeth Mose. They had similar virtues of discipline, passion, hard work and humility. I’m humbled that this achievement symbolizes what you stood for in our family!
Acknowledgments

Along my Ph.D. journey, I learned and experienced that collaboration is the magic ingredient for becoming an autonomous person. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all who were involved whether intentional or incidental in helping me in this immense undertaking. This dissertation would have been impossible without the support, help, and encouragement of my advisor, committee members, friends, colleagues, and family. You always inspired me to finish and move on with life.

Dr. David Moore, my advisor, mentor, and chair of my dissertation committee, I am deeply grateful for your thoughtful invaluable guidance, help and support you provided. Your research passion is contagious. I have grown as a person and scholar through your dexterous thought-provoking ability. As for my committee, the best in the world, I could not be happier with another team. Dr. Greg Kessler, Dr. Teresa Franklin, Dr. Krisanna Machtmes, and Dr. Eugene Geist, you made a phenomenal team, learning much from you is an understatement. Special thank you to Dr. Greg Kessler for tirelessly facilitating my funding for four years and your open door policy to a discussion.

Darling, Olena Zastezhko and my Princess Amirah Mose-Zastezhko, thank you for enduring without me when I spend long nights and days in this study. My mama – Mary Kemunto Mose, you worked so hard bringing me up, and you always prayed and encouraged me. Nyasae agosesenie, mbuya mono! Tata – Zephaniah Mose – a hardworking and humble disciplinarian. You passed on a day after my defense; I am confident that you are rejoicing in heaven for what I have achieved. For sure, without
your tough love, I would be nowhere. Now I understand why you inculcated my siblings with an educational appetite!

I am also grateful to my colleagues at Ohio University’s Language Resource Center, my Instructional Technology cohort, and my nine research participants who created for me generous interview time. I would like to thank Professor William Littlewood for allowing me to use his autonomy framework in this study. Special appreciation to Sally Hatfield for diligently proofreading my dissertation, I can’t say thank you more. Most of all, I owe my gratitude to the Almighty God for giving me life and strength. The Lord will always be the anchor of my soul.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1: Introduction</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background of the Study</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Statement</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Study</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delimitations of Study</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of Study</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of the Study</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2: Literature Review</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner Autonomy</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophical Perspectives of Autonomy</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner Autonomy and Related Concepts</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits of Learner Autonomy</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fostering Learner Autonomy</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy and Computer Assisted Language-learning</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21st Century Competencies</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTLs)</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of Related Studies</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concluding Comments</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework of Model</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Framework of Learner Autonomy Development</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Framework for 21st Century Learning</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recruitment of Research Participations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data Gathering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Modification of the van Kaam Method of Analysis of Phenomenological Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concluding Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Presentation, Analysis, and Synthesis of the Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Horizontalization of Participants’ Data: Listing and Preliminary Grouping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Invariant Constituents: Reduction and Elimination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual Textual Description of Learner Autonomy Synopses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participants’ Description of Learner Autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participants’ Strategies for Promoting Learner Autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summary of Findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Results for Research Question 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Results for Research Question 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Closing Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Summary, Outcomes, and Implications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summary of the Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conceptualizing Phenomenological Outcomes with Literature Review Findings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Third-Tier Member Checking .......................................................... 179
Implications for Practice in Instructional Technology ..................... 183
Implications for Future Research ...................................................... 185
A Critique of my Research Methods and Procedures ....................... 187
Closing Comments: Personal Reflection, Future Direction, and Advice to Teachers and Language Learners .................................................. 188
Advice to Teachers and Language Learners ...................................... 190
References .................................................................................. 194
Appendix A: IRB Approval ............................................................... 225
Appendix B: Consent Document ....................................................... 226
Appendix C: Email Invitation to Participate in the interview ............... 228
Appendix D: Letters Seeking Permission to Use Copyrighted Materials . 229
Appendix E: Littlewood’s Permission to Use Copyrighted Materials ...... 230
Appendix F: Instructors Interview Protocol ...................................... 231
Appendix G: Students Interview Protocol ....................................... 234
Appendix H: Final Identification of the Invariant Constituents and Themes 237
Appendix I: Case by Case Summary Extracted from MAXQDA .......... 279
## List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1</td>
<td>Participants’ Demographics</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2</td>
<td>Themes, Subthemes and Definitions for Research Question 1</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3</td>
<td>Frequency of Theme and Subtheme for Research Question 1</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4</td>
<td>Themes, Subthemes and definitions for Research Question 2</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5</td>
<td>Frequency of Themes and Subthemes for Research Question 2</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 6</td>
<td>Devices Use Distribution</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures

Figure 1: Framework for developing autonomy for foreign language-learning ...............53
Figure 2: Data gathering timeline .............................................................................81
Figure 3: Interview transcriptions data imported into MAXQDA interface ..............84
Figure 4: MAXQDA interface ..................................................................................86
Figure 5: Listing and preliminary grouping of themes ...........................................88
Figure 6: Horizon of experience phrases .................................................................89
Figure 7: Clustering and thematizing .......................................................................90
Figure 8: Summary of invariant constituents and themes .........................................91
Figure 9a: MAXQDA summary extraction for Haki ..................................................281
Figure 9b: MAXQDA summary extraction for Haki ..................................................282
Figure 10a: MAXQDA summary extraction for Hazina ...........................................283
Figure 10b: MAXQDA summary extraction for Hazina ...........................................284
Figure 11a: MAXQDA summary extraction for Jasiri ..............................................285
Figure 11b: MAXQDA summary extraction for Jasiri ..............................................286
Figure 12a: MAXQDA summary extraction for Latifah ...........................................287
Figure 12b: MAXQDA summary extraction for Latifah ...........................................288
Figure 13a: MAXQDA summary extraction for Zakia ..............................................289
Figure 13b: MAXQDA summary extraction for Zakia ..............................................290
Figure 14: MAXQDA summary extraction for Adimu ..............................................291
Figure 15a: MAXQDA summary extraction for Almasi ............................................292
Figure 15b: MAXQDA summary extraction for Almasi .............................................. 293
Figure 16a: MAXQDA summary extraction for Fatuma ............................................. 294
Figure 16b: MAXQDA summary extraction for Fatuma ............................................. 295
Figure 17a: MAXQDA summary extraction for Najma .............................................. 296
Figure 17b: MAXQDA summary extraction for Najma .............................................. 297
Chapter 1: Introduction

A lot of it comes down to guided autonomy, so, on the one hand, we know from research that people are much better at work when they feel empowered, which consists of having meaning on the job, a sense of confidence, and also an impact on what you do and the people you’re trying to help. Yet you don’t want to feel so autonomous that you have no direction. It’s one thing to feel autonomous in terms of your motivation, but it’s another thing to be autonomous and go in the wrong direction. (Wolfe, n.d.)

This study examines the phenomenon of learner autonomy in Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTLS) in a mid-sized midwestern university in the U.S. It seeks to investigate how instructors and students of LCTLS describe learner autonomy and to determine what strategies they perceive promote learner autonomy in LCTLS. This research applied qualitative phenomenology methodology to examine teaching and learning experiences of Swahili instructors and students.

Background of the Study

Autonomy is “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning” (Holec, 1981 p. 3). Many scholars describe autonomy as freedom from external control or influence. For instance, Little (1994) defines autonomy as both independence and interdependence; that is, taking responsibility for one’s learning, setting objectives, and making informed pedagogical decisions with regard to learning. Other definitions have since emerged, but they also focus on taking responsibility and making decisions about learning. The idea of learner autonomy is prevalent in research on language teaching and learning. For
instance, it has been found that learners who are autonomous achieve their learning goals efficiently (Ambrosio, 2010; Beatty, 2013; Chapelle, 2005). Learners that are autonomous can identify their learning goals and processes and organize their learning to reflect good information processing skills (Boud, 2013; Clegg, 2004; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2014), and autonomous learners can access learning resources on their own (Benson, 2011; Benson & Voller, 2014; Littlewood, 1996; Reinders & Balcikanli, 2011).

Learner autonomy is also a relatively common and important concept with regard to second and foreign language learning (Benson, 2013; Benson & Voller, 2014; Kessler & Bikowski, 2010). Several scholars have discussed the concept of learner autonomy in second language (L2) research (Benson, 2013; Dam & Little, 1998; Holec, 1981; Little, 1991, 1996; Littlewood, 1996; Reinders & Hubbard, 2013). They postulate that learner autonomy is important for language learners because learners can set their goals, choose learning resources, assess their progress, and reflect on their performance, thereby attaining independence in language learning. While there have been many definitions of learner autonomy, depending on the researcher and the context, in this study, I am using Illés’s (2012) who describes learner autonomy as “taking responsibility for various aspects and stages of one’s learning process, including setting goals, determining content, selecting resources and techniques, as well as assessing progress” (p. 506). I chose this definition because, first, it is encompassing and can be used in many contexts and situations, including a language-learning context. Secondly, most of the definitions of learner autonomy are understood from the researchers’ perspective, but in this study, my aim was to understand and describe learner autonomy from the participants’ perspectives;
that is, the instructors’ and students’ experiences of language teaching and learning a language.

Emergent digital technologies and the Internet have come to play a critical role in promoting learner autonomy (Benson & Reinders, 2011; Hajhashemi, Shakaramia, & Khajehei, 2013; Reinders & Hubbard, 2013). Learning in the 21st century not only requires thinking skills and content knowledge but also the ability for self-directed navigation in a globally competitive information age (Beetham & Sharpe, 2013; Garrison, 2011; Mathiasen & Schrum, 2010). Free and ubiquitous access to resources is one way in which technology may promote learner autonomy and sharpen knowledge acquisition skills. Trilling and Fadel (2009) claim that “learning in the 21st century must all be self-managed and self-directed” (p. 78). The 21st century is thriving in regards to technology and media, with abundant information, tools, and collaboration opportunities (http://www.p21.org/about-us/p21-framework). Therefore, it is imperative for people to creatively integrate the new information and learning tools into their learning. They must be able to exhibit a range of functional and critical thinking skills related to information, media, and technology in order to benefit effectively from the abundant information and new learning tools that they provide.

Many language teachers have tried to find ways to reconcile these new technological learning tools with different types of learning environments while maintaining individual aspects of learning (Reinders & Hubbard, 2013). As explained by Levy and Stockwell (2013), learners aim to explore technology to become more autonomous or independent and to overcome the innate limitations of learning a language
in a new learning environment. To address the learning challenge brought about by different learning environments, many people have developed an interest in computer-assisted language learning (CALL) in order to keep pace with the latest technology trends in a language-learning environment. Some claim that CALL is the most innovative practice in second language (L2) learning (Chapelle, 2005; Hall & Cook, 2013; Jones, 2001). CALL has been shown to promote learner autonomy and raise proficiency in language learning (Benson & Voller, 2014; Boud, 2012; Lee, 2011; Schwienhorst, 2012; Blin, 2004; Jones, 2001; Toyoda, 2001). However, this success has typically been observed in commonly taught languages (CTLs), such as Spanish, French, and German (Somyürek, 2015; Barrete, 2013; Dang, 2012; Lee, 2011; Murray, Gao & Lamb, 2011; Otheguy & Stern, 2011; Darasawang & Reinders, 2010), that limited research has been done so far in the use of CALL for the teaching and learning of (LCTLs).

**Less commonly taught languages.**

The term “less commonly taught languages” applies to all languages other than the three most commonly taught languages (Spanish, French, and German) in U.S. public schools and other institutions (http://www.ncolctl.org/about/objectives-and-activities, n.d.; Robin, 2013). LCTLs include Chinese, Russian, Arabic, Swahili, Japanese, Hindi, Twi, Finnish, among others. There is a large discrepancy between the teaching of the CTLs and the LCTLs, with 90 percent of U.S. foreign language students studying one of the four CTLs (Long & Uscinski, 2012; Furman, Goldberg & Lusin, 2010; Wiley, 2004). Many scholars are concerned that the definition of a LCTL is too general and fails to capture other features related to technology, proficiency, and resources available for
teaching and learning a language (Robin, 2013; Furman, Goldberg, Lusin, 2010). Walton (1991) provides a fairly inclusive description of LCTLS by subdividing them into three subgroups: less commonly taught European languages such as Russian, Italian, Portuguese, and Swedish; higher enrollment non-Indo-European languages, such as Arabic, Chinese, and Japanese; and lower enrollment non-Indo-European languages such as Burmese, Indonesian, and Swahili. I will describe characteristics associated with LCTLs in Chapter Two.

LCTLs are crucial for strategic importance in the U.S. (http://www.ncolctl.org/about, n.d.). Interest in LCTLs in the past ten years has been driven by concerns of U.S. national security. After September 11, 2001, when a series of four coordinated attacks occurred on U.S. soil, federal departments acknowledged the importance of LCTLs, particularly Arabic (Furman, Goldberg & Lusin, 2010; http://www.nsep.gov/, n.d.; Wiley, 2004). As a result, U.S. institutions of learning initiated a variety of programs to promote the teaching and learning of LCTLs, such as the National Flagship Language Initiative (NFLI; http://www.thelanguageflagship.org/), National Security Education Program (NSEP; http://www.nsep.gov/content/mission-and-objectives), and a wide range of language training centers, fellowships, and scholarships. The aim of these programs was to develop a large number of diverse experts in LCTLs who would study areas connected to U.S. national security interests.

Problem Statement

In language learning, learner autonomy is often encouraged, as it facilitates learners being engaged and proactive with their learning (Benson, 2014; Lee, 2011).
Previous research shows how learners of CTLs such as English, Spanish, German, and French have benefited from being autonomous (Lee, 2011; Warschauer, 2011; Benson, 2010; Darasawang & Reinders, 2010; Levy & Stockwell, 2006; Littlewood, 1998), and emerging digital technology and the Internet have changed the nature of language instruction (Blake, 2013; Robin, 2013; Dede, 2010). CTLs have benefited from this change more than LCTLs due to the availability of learning materials for specific pedagogical input, creation of modular learning materials, and ability to use raw web materials for instruction (Robin, 2013). These efforts of creating new materials have been influenced by do-it-yourself (DIY) movement (Samtani, 2013; Kafai & Peppler, 2011). DIY is the ability to create, modify, or repair materials without direct help of experts (Kafai & Pepper, 2011). However, because the world is experiencing technological transformation in the teaching and learning of languages, the significance of technological change for LCTLs is greater (Benson, 2013; Schwienhorst, 2012; Ming-jing, 2010). Currently, LCTLs seem to be characterized by a scarcity of quality teaching and learning resources; the few available materials require great forbearance and search skills. Few studies have focused on teaching experiences that promote learner autonomy illuminated in LCTLs. For this reason, this study was motivated to determine what strategies instructors and students can utilize to overcome a lack of resources that foster autonomy in LCTLs.

**Purpose of the Study**

The goal of this phenomenological study was to investigate the teaching and learning experiences of LCTL instructors and students in a mid-sized midwestern
university in the U.S. in order to, a) explain how the participants of this study describe learner autonomy in a LCTL context, and b) describe what are considered to be best practices to promote learner autonomy in the teaching of LCTLs. The data gathering process incorporated in-depth interviews and memoing in an effort to ascertain the strategies that contributed to the participants’ learning autonomy in LCTLs. The data gathered was managed using MAXQDA, qualitative data analysis software. This study is guided by the following research questions:

**Research Questions.**

1. How do LCTL instructors and learners describe the phenomena of learner autonomy?
2. What strategies do LCTL instructors and students use to promote learner autonomy?

**Theoretical Framework**

This study is informed by Littlewood’s (1996) framework of learner autonomy development, which is informed by a constructivist worldview. Constructivists seek to understand the world in which they live and work (Creswell, 2013). Individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences that are varied and multiple and cause the researcher to look for complexity rather than narrowing meanings to a few categories or ideas. The goal of the constructivist worldview is to rely as much as possible on the participants’ views. Littlewood (1996) states, “an autonomous person is one who has an independent capacity to make and carry out the choices that govern his/her actions” (p.
His proposition has two components: ability (knowledge and skills) and willingness (motivation and confidence).

**Methodology.**

In this study, data was generated through a qualitative phenomenological methodology to explore learner autonomy beliefs and lived experiences of LCTL instructors and students at a midwestern university. In this type of inquiry, a researcher describes lived experiences as described by individuals who had experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014; Vagle, 2014; McLeod, 2011; Moustakas, 1994). According to Patton (2002), this methodology also allows researchers to determine the feelings and thoughts of people engaged in the phenomenon. To gather data for participants’ experiences, I utilized memos and interviews (Giorgi, 2009; Moustakas, 1994).

**Significance of the Study**

Language learning and teaching in the 21st century has changed significantly (Beetham & Sharpe, 2013, Garrison, 2011; Dede, 2010;). New and emerging technologies appear to be changing the landscape of learning and teaching of second languages globally by impacting learning methods, tools, and learning preferences at both individual and group levels (Tyner, 2014; Benson, 2013; Eaton, 2010; McLoughlin & Lee, 2010; Levy, 2009). While acknowledging these developments, this study seeks to go beyond that, as will be explained below.

First, this study is unique, particularly among LCTLs. Learning and teaching resources for LCTLs are scarce, and the resources that exist are mostly of poor quality.
This study will be beneficial to instructors and students in determining what effective strategies to employ in choosing effective learning materials and strategies in a LCTL context. By understanding their learning autonomy, instructors and students can identify effective strategies for searching for LCTL learning resources that require advanced search skills. This research will provide recommendations on how to create, design, evaluate, and utilize various learning tools and strategies to promote learner autonomy.

This study has practical and pedagogical implications for instructors, students, and instructional designers and aims to:

1. Provide opportunities for designing and creating new LCTL resources based on an understanding of learning contexts and needs;
2. Create awareness of the 21st century learning tools and strategies and inform instructors and students on the best practices for identifying and choosing learning resources in a media-suffused environment;
3. Inform readers of future research agendas in relation to learner autonomy and LCTLs, since little empirical research currently exists; and
4. Foster the understanding of learner autonomy in LCTLs and assist instructional designers and other stakeholders in LCTL curriculum and course designs that are in line with emerging technologies.

**Delimitations of Study**

The purpose of this study is to describe the strategies used by instructors and students of LCTLs to promote learner autonomy. The participants of this study were from one mid-sized midwestern university in the U.S. In transferability situations, universities
of a similar size or from the same region might benefit from the findings of this study. Owing to this, it will be the discretion of my audience to understand my findings and choose what is applicable to their contexts and populations in order to inform their instructors and students of LCTLs. Due to the scope of this phenomenological study, my sample of participants is not intended to represent all Swahili LCTL instructors and students in the U.S.

**Limitations of Study**

This study focused on both graduate students and instructors of LCTLs at the university level in a mid-sized midwestern university in the U.S. Although the proliferation of technology seems to be evident across the globe, this study was bound by time, study sample, and research design. Also, the study was limited to physical boundaries of students learning Swahili as a LCTL in a mid-sized midwestern university in the U.S. This limits the possible transferability of this study to the college-aged population of the U.S.

Researcher bias could be considered a limitation in this study. The researcher had a prior familiarity with the participants, both as a colleague and as an instructor. Although some might consider this role as a limitation, I have a contrary opinion. First, confirmability of this research was done through member checks, follow-up interviews, and peer debriefs. Therefore, my interpretation and reporting were undergoing constant validation. Secondly, the years of experience of teaching Swahili and involvement with fellow instructors and students were perceived as an asset, which I utilized to design my research questions and gain trust from participants. In qualitative research, the researcher
cannot be detached from the research process (Charmaz, 2014; Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002). To validate myself as a data collection tool, I have described my past experiences, biases, and prejudices and my position with regard to learner autonomy in LCTLs in a previous section (Creswell, 2012; Tracy, 2010; Moustakas, 1994).

**Definition of Terms**

The following definitions are used to assist in the understanding of this study:

*Learner Autonomy:* this entails students “taking responsibility for various aspects and stages of their learning process, including setting goals, determining content, selecting resources and techniques, as well as assessing progress” (Cotterall, 2000 as cited in Illés, 2012, p. 506).

*Framework for developing learner autonomy:* a model of language learning that identifies a learner as: (1) a communicator, (2) self-directed person, and (3) as a person who can self-express meanings (Littlewood, 1996).

*CALL:* “computer assisted language learning; the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning” (Levy, 1997, p. 1).

*Constructivism:* “a philosophy in which individuals seek to understand the world in which they live and work by developing subjective meanings of their experiences that are varied and multiple, and which makes the researcher look for complexity rather than narrowing meanings to a few categories or ideas” (Creswell, 2013, p. 8).

*Epoche:* “we set aside our prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas about things. we “invalidate,” “inhibit,” and “disqualify” all commitments with reference to previous knowledge and experience” (Schmitt. 1968, as cited in Moustakas, 1994, p. 85);
Imaginative variation: “to seek possible meanings through utilization of imagination, varying frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles, or functions” (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 97–98).

Instructor: a teacher who teaches less commonly taught languages.

Invariant constituent: expressions that contain a moment of experience that is possible to label or state in exact terms (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121).

Language-learning: a cognitive process of acquiring language skills or knowledge (Gass, 2013).

Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTLs): a designation used in the United States for languages other than the three most commonly taught languages in U.S. public schools (Spanish, French, and German; www.ncolctl.org).

Lived Experience: “a reflective or self-given awareness, which is, as awareness, unaware of itself” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 35); personal knowledge achieved through getting involved directly with something on a first-hand basis.

Member check: “it consists of taking data and interpretations back to the participants in the study in so that they can confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127).

Memoing: “is the researcher’s field notes recording what the researchers hears, sees, experiences and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the process” (Groenwald, 2004, p. 13).
**Peer Debrief:** “Is the review of the data and research process by someone who is familiar with the research or phenomenon being explored” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 129).

**Phenomenology:** “Phenomenology is an approach to thinking about what life experiences of people are like and what they mean” (Polit-O'Hara & Beck, 2006, p. 54)

**Phenomenological Reduction:** “describing in textural language just what one sees, not only in terms of the external object but also the internal act of consciousness, the experience as such, the rhythm and relationship between phenomenon and self” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 90).

**Phenomenon:** “The abstract concept under study, most often used by qualitative researchers in lieu of the term variable” a fact or situation that is observed to exist or happen, especially one whose cause or explanation is in question ((Polit-O'Hara & Beck, 2006, p. 506).

**Researcher Reflexivity:** “This is the process whereby researchers report on personal beliefs, values, and biases that may shape their inquiry” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127).

**SLA:** second language learning; “the process of learning another language after the native language has been learned” (Gass, 2013, p. 4).

**Self-access:** the management and acquisition of appropriate learning materials for self-study.
**Self-directed Learning**: “is seen as self-teaching, whereby learners are capable of taking control of the mechanics and techniques of teaching themselves in a particular; conceived as personal autonomy”. (Knowles, Holton III, & Swanson, 2011, p. 184).

**Self-regulated Learning**: “self-regulated learning includes students’ metacognitive strategies for planning, monitoring, and modifying their cognition in a process characterized by taking control of one’s own learning and behavior” (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990, p. 33).

**Synthesis**: “integration of the fundamental textural and structural descriptions into a unified statement of the essences of the experience of the phenomenon as a whole” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 100).

**Organization of the Study**

This dissertation is organized into six chapters. This chapter provided the introduction and context of the study. In Chapter 2, I will review the literature by providing an overview of learner autonomy, less commonly taught languages, and finally a synthesis of studies related to the concept of learner autonomy and language-learning. In Chapter 3, I will describe the conceptual framework of the model by discussing the framework of learner autonomy development, 21st century competencies, and phenomenological research design and assumptions. In Chapter 4, I will explain my research methodology. In Chapter 5, I will present findings, analysis, and a synthesis of my data. Lastly, Chapter 6 will contain a summary of the study, research outcomes, a conceptualization of the findings and literature review, implications for the practice of instructional technology and future research, and closing comments.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter is a review of literature relevant to my guiding research questions. In order to understand my research phenomenon, this review is organized as follows: The first part discusses learner autonomy from a constructivist framework of learner autonomy development. In the second part, I discuss 21st century learning framework and competencies and its relationship to learner autonomy. The third part is an in-depth exploration of learner autonomy and the role of computer assisted language-learning in promoting autonomy. The fourth part describes less commonly taught languages (LCTLs). The last part of the chapter explores previous and current literature related to learner autonomy and language-learning.

Learner Autonomy

Recent technologies and increased Internet use indicate changes in most aspects of the modern society. Learning in the 21st century involves “learning how to learn and learning how to find and evaluate useful resources” (Collins & Halverson, 2009, p.109). This is an important goal of education, and instructors need to rethink on how to help learners achieve the goal. One way of doing this is by helping learners to learn autonomously with different learning resources in a variety of contexts.

Other scholars have defined autonomy in the following ways: Autonomy is both independence and interdependence (Little, 1991; 1995). Independence is taking responsibility for one’s learning, setting objectives, and making informed pedagogical decisions based on some form of evaluation (Benson, 2013; Blin, 2004; Littlewood, 1999) while interdependence is collaborative learning where group members work
together individually and collectively for success (Benson, 2013; Boud, 2012; Littlewood, 1999). Littlewood relates learner autonomy to the learner’s psychological relation to the process and content of learning. Shetzer and Warschauer (2000) describe learner autonomy as having the ability to identify and solve learning problems using their own resources (Shetzer & Warchauer, 2000; Thanasoulas, 2000).

According to Ryan (1991), autonomy is a process of ‘self-determination’ or ‘self-regulation’ (p. 210). He posits that in autonomy; one experiences the self to be an agent, the “locus of causality” of one’s behavior. The author, in his view, explains that autonomy produces actions, which are authentic and self-motivated. Many other scholars support this definition; that autonomy entails students’ metacognitive strategies for planning, monitoring, and modifying their thoughts and behaviors (Cohen, 2014; Lazakidou & Retalis, 2010). These definitions are interrelated in many ways; a common factor that binds them is the learners’ ability to take charge in what they doing.

However, the context in those definitions is not exclusively described to demonstrate autonomy. The concept of learner autonomy, been used to define at least five other contexts and/or phenomena: situations in which learners study entirely on their own. In this case, “a set of skills that can be learned and applied in self-directed learning; an inborn capacity which is suppressed by institutional education; learners’ assumption of responsibility for their own learning; and the right of learners to determine the direction of their own learning” (Thanasoulas, 2000, p. 2). The five contexts appear to describe autonomy fairly accurate in a manner that seems acceptable to most scholars. On the other hand, Holec (1985) insists that autonomy should be used to describe the capacity of
the learner rather than situations in which learners work under their own direction outside the conventional language-teaching classroom. This is what the constructivist theoretical underpinning support, that is, the ability to construct meaning. Many scholars have adopted Holec’s position; for example, Farrell and Jacob (2010) explains that autonomy emphasizes the role of the learner rather than the role of the teacher by mostly focusing on the process rather than the product. Other scholars also explain that autonomy encourages learners to develop their own purposes for learning where learning is viewed as a lifelong process (Boud, 2012; Knowles, Holton III, & Swanson, 2011; Day, 1999).

For this study, I adopted the following definition; “autonomy entails students taking responsibility for various aspects and stages of their learning process, including setting goals, determining content, selecting resources and techniques, as well as assessing their progress” (Cotterall, 2000 as cited in Illés, 2012, p. 506). For this to be possible, learners need to free themselves from the direction and control of others in order to become autonomous learners (Benson, 2014; Farell & Jacobs, 2010; Little, 1995;).

Subtle differences may exist between learner autonomy and other related concepts. In the following discussion, I aim to make a distinction between learner autonomy and other closely related concepts as well as the benefits of learner autonomy and how to foster learner autonomy.

**Philosophical Perspectives of Autonomy**

The notion of learner autonomy is grounded in two philosophical world-views, constructivism and pragmatism. Modern philosophers like Carl Rogers (1902 – 1987),
Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804), and Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746 – 1827), are among the proponents of these philosophical worldviews; they emphasize the need to have learners exercise freedom and have freewill to make learning choices. Kant (1724 – 1804) asserts that “learners’ own thinking has to be respected, that students must always see the point of what they are learning and be free to pursue their own conceptions in their own ways” (as cited in Bonnet & Cuypers, 2003, p. 236). Pestalozzi insists that learners should learn through activity and through things; he further claims that learners should be let free to pursue their own interests and draw their own conclusions. These philosophers’ perspectives, particularly Carl Rogers’ idea of self-actualization and the notion of a fully functioning person, influence my thought in this study. Every person can achieve his or her goals, wishes, and desires in life (Rogers as cited in McLeod, 2014). He reveals that “the organized, consistent set of perceptions and beliefs about oneself” can explain fairly well how autonomy works.

**Learner Autonomy and Related Concepts**

Learner autonomy is closely knit to other terms such as self-directed learning (Benson, 2001; 2013), self-regulated learning, learner control, and self-access (Benson, 2013; Loch & McLoughlin, 2011; Blin, 2004). In this study, I will define concepts related to autonomy in order to gain an understanding of differences between the concepts.

A self-directed concept of learning is central to the study and practice of adult learning (Garrison, 1997). Self-directed learning “is a process in which individuals take initiative with or without the assistance of others in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning,
choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes” (Knowles, 1975, p. 18).

Self-regulated learning concerns the application of general modes of regulation and self-regulation with regard to learning; in particular, academic learning that takes place in school or classroom context (Pintrich, 2000, p. 451). Self-regulated learning includes students’ metacognitive strategies for planning, monitoring, and modifying their cognition in a process characterized by taking control of one’s own learning and behavior (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990). Self-access is also related to learner autonomy. Self-access is the management and acquisition of appropriate learning materials for self-study (Benson, 2013; Gardner & Miller, 1999; Kessler & Bikowski, 2010). The differences in definition maybe subtle but the general generally, these definitions are often characterized by the component of taking control of one’s self in executing a given behavior.

**Benefits of Learner Autonomy**

Learner autonomy originated in the field of adult education (andragogy) (Knowles, Holton III, & Swanson, 2014; 2011), its recent development has confirmed that it could also be used with young learners with guided and gradual introduction (Chan, 2010; Jarvis, 2011; Zhe, 2009). Therefore, the concept of learner autonomy may be useful for students of all ages due to its ability to cater to individual needs of learners at all levels. Previous studies indicate that learners who learn autonomously acquire skills that are applicable in solving various problems they may face in their learning process. Such learners are able to develop new and creative strategies whenever the need arise.
Self-reflection, assessment, evaluation, and feedback are key features of the concept of learner autonomy: learners can direct their attention without difficulty, or they may decide to concentrate on general aspects of a task; they can do self-monitoring and evaluation; they can appraise themselves in relation to their standards; also, they can reinforce and reward themselves when they succeed in tasks (Thanasoulas, 2000).

Learners who are more autonomous are quite efficient and effective while engaging in many activities (Benson & Voller, 2014; Boud, 2012). Most commonly, learn according to their needs and learning that comes from one’s desire or self will usually has better chances of absorbing information. Learners can identify their learning goals and processes, they have good approaches and skills, and they can organize their learning to reflect good information processing skills (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 2013; Garrison, 2011; Clegg, 2004).

**Fostering Learner Autonomy**

Learner autonomy development is characterized by three stages: raising awareness, changing attitudes, and transferring roles (Dang; 2012; Hafner & Miller, 2011; Scharle & Szabo, 2000). Each of these stages has some significance in the learner. Raising awareness brings learners’ inner processes to the conscious level of their thinking. Change of attitudes involves breaking of older patterns of learning through practicing skills previously learned. Transferring of roles implies taking responsibility of one’s own learning through loosely structured tasks. This study will focus on transferring of roles since it is directly related to learner autonomy, where the learner takes charge of their own learning. This stage is developed under the following approaches: Resource-
based approach, technology-based approach, learner-based approach, classroom-based approach, and curriculum-based approach.

**Resource–based approach.**

This approach emphasizes independent interaction with learning materials (Benson, 2011, p.125). This approach covers self-access, tandem learning, distance learning, self-instruction, and out of class learning, that shares learners’ independent interaction with physical, human or digital language-learning resources. This approach gives learners an opportunity to self-direct their learning and development of skills through experimentation and discovery. CALL and online learning are examples of resource-based learning, which also covers technology (Benson, 2011; Freeman, Patel, Routen, Ryan, & Scott, 2013).

Technology has accelerated the use of different forms of resource-based learning. Technology is seen to create a new form of literacy (Breivik, 2005, p. 22). This literacy requires autonomous learners to plan and organize information (Blumenfeld, Soloway, Marx, Krajcik, Guzdial & Palincsar, 1991). In this approach, autonomy can be developed by self-direction i.e., being able to take responsibility for what to learn, when and how (Shucart, Mishina, Takahasi & Enokizono, 2008); and being able to self-access e.g., knowing how to manage and acquire appropriate materials for self-study (Hafner & Miller, 2011; Gardner & Miller, 1999). At the core of self-access language-learning is the idea of language resource centers, where learners typically access materials such as DVDs, audio, computer software, and hardware, and other online resources. Many
scholars agree that self-access centers are instrumental in developing an interest in autonomy (Benson, 2011).

Distance learning has influenced learner autonomy. Benson (2011) explains that in distance education and self-instruction, they spend little or no time in school. For this reason, they are required to learn autonomously. “Distance learners respond to the demands of self-instruction mode of study by developing knowledge of how they can manage the process of language-learning for themselves” (White, 1995, p. 217).

Generally, resource-based approach fosters autonomy by providing learners with opportunities to direct their learning.

**Technology-based approach.**

Computer-assisted language-learning (CALL) is considered a technology-based approach to autonomous learning. Warschauer and Healy (1998) divide CALL technology-based approach into three distinct phases: behavioristic, communicative, and integrative phases. I will primarily focus on integrative phase because it is directly related to learner autonomy and technology. The integrative phase of CALL employs multimedia, hypermedia, and interactive technologies to promote an integration of skills. The teacher is a facilitator who encourages the student to select materials in a self-directed manner (Shucart et al., 2008, p. 486).

**Autonomy and Computer Assisted Language-learning**

**Computer Assisted Language-learning (CALL).**

“CALL is the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning” (Levy, 1997, p. 1). Other scholars have defined it differently to
accommodate the changing and emerging technology. Hubbard (2003) defines CALL as “any process in which a learner uses a computer and, as a result, improves his or her language” (p. 7).

There is little doubt that CALL is currently the most innovative area in the practice of foreign and second language (L2) teaching and learning (Beetham & Sharpe, 2013; Tomlinson, 2011; Jones, 2001). Recent research indicates that CALL promotes learner autonomy, which the 21st century pedagogical paradigm shift seems to advocate. Many scholars claim that use of CALL in language-learning has genuinely raised learners’ language proficiency and encouraged learner autonomy (Schwienhorst, 2008, 2012; Blin, 2004; Jones, 2001; Toyoda, 2001). Little (1996) explains that CALL “can promote the development of learner autonomy to the extent that they can stimulate, mediate and extend the range and scope of the social and psychological interaction on which all learning depends on” (p. 203).

In his article ‘CALL and the teacher’s role in promoting learner autonomy’ Jones (2001) examines the relationship between CALL and autonomy while focusing on the role of the teacher in making the technology an effective learning tool. He contends that success of CALL depends on the active role of the teacher whether in the classroom or a self-access center. The author affirms that the teacher plays a vital role in developing students’ autonomy.
How CALL promotes learner autonomy.

CALL operates under the following principles to promote learner autonomy: goals, strategies, communication and collaboration, interaction, authenticity, reflection, and experimentation. Each of the principles contributes to learner autonomy.

Goals, tasks, and strategies.

The main goal of CALL program in this principle is to teach learners diverse learning strategies, assisting them in finding methods that best suit their learning needs (Țurloiu & Stefánsdóttir, 2011). Levy and Stockwell (2006) posit that successful use of CALL in this principle depends on teachers having a clear idea of what they want to achieve in classroom. This would be seen as an effort of not leaving all decisions to learners, but rather seen as a form of collaboration between the teacher and the learner because of the subtle line that divides the two. Levy and Stockwell insist that most teachers have problems with defining their objectives clearly before embarking on the use of CALL. CALL experts state that teachers and other practitioners have to make a decision with regard to what hardware and software to use to achieve their objectives.

Reflection.

According to Schwienhorst (2012) reflection is important in promoting learner autonomy. He claims that learners are able to develop linguistic and metalinguistic awareness when they reflect critically on task presented by CALL. Cotterall (2000) confirms the same by clarifying that when learners reflect, they are able to distinguish or discover realistic and unrealistic goals they may have set. In the process of reflection,
learners are able to evaluate their own performance on tasks thereby proposing appropriate remedial effort on tasks they appeared to have problems with.

Engagement.

Learner autonomy depends on the learner’s needs or adapts in accordance with their needs (Chapelle, 2005). Many instructional designers prescribe methods that are adaptive to the desires of the learner (Johnassen & Grabowski, 1993) in order to keep the learner more engaged with learning materials. However, the learners fit can be explained by “the amount of opportunity for engagement with language under appropriate conditions given learner learner’s characteristics” (Chapelle, 2001, p. 55).

Collaboration.

The CALL environment provides opportunities to work in groups (Egbert, 2005). Meirik, Imants, Meijer, and Verloop (2010) explain that group collaboration is a promising direction in professional development. Benson (2013) also explains that collaboration among students leads to autonomy development. In a language-learning context, Kessler and Bikowski (2010) observed that students demonstrated the ability to use target language to independently contribute personal meanings as a collaborative member of a group and benefited from group members.

Authenticity.

The issue of authenticity has been discussed within and outside the CALL context with regard to learner autonomy (McGarry, 1995) as cited in Schwienhorst, 2012). According to McGarry (1995), when students work on topics that are of interest to them, they are likely to adopt a more positive attitude to the task in hand because the subject
makes the task more enjoyable or more meaningful. The interplay of these principles might yield better results in promoting learner autonomy.

21st Century Competencies

Success in learning is the ultimate goal many people aim to achieve. Cuban (2011) explains that learning is an indispensable investment required for success in the ‘information age’ (p. 7). Learners can gain relatively much if they know how to access and manipulate information autonomously. “The current generation of students was born into a highly technological world. They inhabit, navigate and communicate within a society which is both technologically-rich and information rich” (MCEETYA, 2005, p. 74). The New Horizon study of 2014 highlights six necessary skills for the 21st century digital learners; social media, collaboration, online learning, content creation, multitasking, and personalized learning. These skills assist in the formal and informal learning environments and they are useful for second language learners. These six skill-set noted earlier can enhance the capabilities of second-language learners.

Social media.

Social media is becoming ubiquitous in the modern society (Dron & Anderson, 2014; Ratto, Boler & Deibert, 2014). Many people now have a variety of mobile devices that they can use to access social media anywhere and anytime. These ubiquities are changing how people interact, present ideas and information, and judge the quality of content (Johnson, Adams Becker, Estrada, Freeman, 2014). Technology trends indicate that most learners gather information from multiple sources, such as, online environments, magazines, and other social sites such as Facebook and Twitter (Cheever
Learners sieve through a relatively huge amount of information to choose relevant material that they need for learning. The ability to filter through relevant information is crucial for learners because they may need such skills to demonstrate their perceived level of autonomy (Benson, 2014).

**Collaboration.**

Studies have shown that individuals who work as groups outperform those who work individually in solving all problem types (Johnson et al., 2014; Benson, 2013; Meirink, Imants, Meijer, Verloop, 2010). Online learning, however, has amplified the potential for collaboration between students and students can access content outside the classroom, as well as meet and exchange ideas on a subject or a project in a virtual environment (Romero & Barberà, 2011; Williams, Karousou & Mackness, 2011; Wang, 2010). Previously, learners were bound by spatial limitations but now they seem to be freed by the advent of mobile devices. Understanding the affordances these mobile devices offer can help to maximize their potential in education. Therefore, it would be crucial for instructors and learners to understand these advantages together with their application.

Learning perceptions have changed to be more favorable to online learning (Johnson et al., 2014). Students, according to Johnson et al. (2014), spend considerable amounts of time on the Internet, learning and exchanging new information. Allen and Seaman (2010b) report that the perceptions majority of academic leaders’ at public institutions favor online learning compared to face-to-face learning. Report by School Market Research Institute indicates a burgeoning demand for online learning from both
young and old learners of all levels (Barth, Hull & Andrie, 2012). A relatively large impact has been felt in public institutions where face-to-face classes have incorporated an online component (Allen & Seaman, 2010b). The most common formats used are blended learning and solely online. Universities are incorporating online environments into courses of all kinds; this makes the content more dynamic, flexible, and accessible to a larger number of learners (Johnson et al., 2014; Keengwe & Kidd, 2010; Rhode, 2009). This expansion of online learning is the skills to learn in various learning environments, particularly, online environments accessible via mobile devices.

**Content creation.**

A shift from students as consumers to students as creators; is happening across disciplines where online communities illustrate creativity through learning (Lee, 2011; Johnson et al., 2014). Learners are using their personal mobile devices in different ways; most learners have transformed their device to be content creators and delivery platforms (Jones, Issroff, Scanlon, Clough, McAndrew & Blake, 2006; Rideout, Foehr & Roberts, 2010).

**Multitasking.**

Jenkins, Purushotma, Weigel, Clinton, & Robinson (2009) define multitasking as “the ability to scan one’s environment and shift focus onto salient details on an ad hoc basis” (p. 2). Informal learning environments are producing learners with a new profile of cognitive skill (Greenfield, 2009, p. 69). Learners engage in informal environment by interacting with different media, such as television, video games and Internet. Greenfield
asserts that multitasking fosters critical thinking, visualization, imagination, and reflective thinking among learners.

**Personalized learning.**

Johnson et al. (2014) claim that “there is a growing interest in developing tools and algorithms for revealing patterns learners follow in learning and apply them to improve instructional systems” (p. 12). This is appears to be in line with the 21st century learning goals; learners want to access information and learn in a different way (Tompkins, Campbell, Green & Smith, 2014; Garrison, 2011). Recent literature confirms that learners want to learn in different learning environments where they are freed in time and space (Garrison, 2011; Starkey, 2011).

These skills are enshrined in a holistic view of 21st century teaching and learning that is dependent on support systems that help students to learn and master the multidimensional abilities required to be competent (Partnership for 21st Century Skills - http://www.p21.org/about-us/p21-framework/61).

The previous section was a discussion of a theoretical aspect of autonomy from the constructivist view, and a description of how learning in the 21st century might influence learner autonomy in language-learning. The following section is an in-depth review of learner autonomy, its philosophical perspectives, and how learner autonomy is related to computer assisted language-learning (CALL).

So far, I have discussed second language-learning in general. In the following section, I will discuss less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) because the less commonly taught languages are the phenomenon of study.
Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTLs)

Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTLs) is a designation used in the United States for languages other than the three most commonly taught languages in U.S. public schools – Spanish, French, and German (www.ncolctl.org). According to some scholars, this definition is too encompassing and fails to capture other features subject to changes and challenges posed by current technology (Furman, Goldberg, Lusin, 2010; Robin, 2013). A crude division of the LCTLs recognizes three subgroups: (1) less commonly taught European languages such as Russian, Italian, Portuguese, and Swedish; (2) higher enrollment non-Indo-European languages, such as Arabic, Chinese, and Japanese; and (3) lower-enrollment non-Indo-European languages such as Burmese, Indonesian, and Swahili (Walton, 1991, p. 1). In this study, I will focus on the third subgroup where Swahili belongs.

English speakers acquire the commonly taught languages, relatively quickly; but most LCTLs are not acquired easily (Jorden & Walton, 1987 as cited in Robin, 2013). The Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR), an organization established for coordination and sharing of information about language-related activities at the federal level, describes LCTLs as those languages whose general proficiency is not achievable in less than 600 hours of small-group instruction (Brooks & Hoffman, 2014; Lett, 2005; Lambert, 1987). Proficiency expectations for LCTLs is different from CTLs; “most LCTLs are harder than French, Spanish, German, for speakers of English, but the proficiency expectations of LCTL learners can be assumed to be higher. It is reasonable to posit that most students of CTLs will not use the languages they are learning in more
than a perfunctory way” (Robin, 2013, p. 304). Data from The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) supports Robins’ explanation; ACTFL explains that LCTL learners are more likely than CTL students to need their language for specific purposes. Higher-level proficiency in most LCTLs is beyond learners learning capabilities, given the resources at hand, and without additional intensive learning programs and practice (Davidson, 2010; Blake, Wilson, Cetto & Pardo-Ballester, 2008;)

Another feature associated with LCTLs is material development. For LCTLs, material development is limited and mostly gated and populated with user-produced content (Robin, 2013). ACTFL (n.d.) explains that LCTLs lack Internet footprint both for material developers and independent learners; this implies that there is a limited pedagogical choice. Despite the wide variety of materials available on the World Wide Web for CTLs, learners of LCTLs are disadvantaged and face difficulties finding appropriate materials from the web (Lim, Campbell, & Smala, 2011).

Less commonly taught does not mean not widely taught (Robin, 2013). LCTLs are commonly referred to those languages with lower class enrolments. From the above subdivision, these languages range from the world’s largest and most influential languages, such as Chinese, Russian, Arabic, Hindi, Portuguese, and Japanese, to the smaller regional languages studied in the U.S. mainly by area experts such as Swahili, and Somali spoken in East Africa, Akan, and Twi spoken in West Africa, and Finnish. The term arose after the need to contrast commonly taught languages in U.S. K-12 public schools with languages normally encountered at university level.
After the 9/11 attack, U.S. federal departments and agencies recognized the strategic importance of LCTLs, particularly Arabic. As a result, many programs for LCTLs such as National Flagship Language Initiative (NFLI) sponsored by National Security Education Program (NSEP) (http://www.nsep.gov/content/mission-and-objectives) were started. These programs were developed with a strategic goal for addressing the need for experts in critical languages and regions in order to increase quantity, diversity, and quality of learning subjects in the fields of foreign languages, and area studies critical to the Nation’s interests (Lane-Toney, 2014; Graber, 2009; Norwood, 2007).

The United States has arguably the world’s most developed foreign language and area studies programs (Ellis, 2015; García & Kleifgen, 2010; Wiley, 2004). Statistics show more than 90 percent of U.S. foreign language students study one of the big three – Spanish, French, and German. Only a few students study LCTLs (www.ncoletl.org). Low class enrolment in LCTLs seems to impact negatively on government and partner funding for these languages. As a result, many university’s language departments are struggling to continue offering LCTL courses. While acknowledging the funding challenge of LCTLs, some scholars have expressed optimism aimed at ensuring the continuity of offering LCTLs in schools. One such scholar is Screenivasan (n.d.); He opines that much of the conversation about LCTLs should focus on online education and helping the students to develop values that will enable them become global citizens that might change a LCTL to a language with demand and influence (Columbia News, n.d.).
NSEP (n.d.) has initiated nine programs to address the challenges of funding associated with LCTLs (or Critical languages). The nine initiatives dubbed ‘Nine Critical Initiatives’ have one goal in common; to provide professionals with language and cultural skills to prepare them for federal government service (NSEP, n.d.; Brustein, 2007; Norwood, 2007). The intentions of these initiatives appear well intended but most of them seem address only the financial aspect of the problem. Lack of sustainability strategies could be a significant need to address in the nine initiatives. These strategies might include design of sound instructional designs, promotion of learner autonomy, collaboration, and online learning. This study will the phenomenon of learner autonomy in LCTLs as understood by instructors and learners and propose suggest some solutions, particularly related to promotion of learner autonomy aimed at addressing the issue of sustainability of LCTLs initiative.

The following section is a review of relevant literature related to learner autonomy in a various learning contexts. The aim of this section is to identify gaps in the literature that the present study might address during or after the research process.

**Review of Related Studies**

Warschauer (2011) examined the role of emerging technologies for autonomous language-learning applicable to self-access and autonomous learning in adult language education. In his study, he sought to investigate how the skills of listening and speaking, collaborative writing, reading and language structure, and online interaction can be developed through emerging technology. The researcher reviewed several technologies, such as, podcasts, blogs, wikis, online writing sites, multiuser virtual environments,
multiplayer games, and chatbots. His findings reveal that new technologies provide more tools for autonomous language-learning for adult learners to improve their languages skills. The new tools provide opportunities for autonomous reading, listening, writing, and interaction. In the 21st century, most new technologies are familiar to most language learners. Mark’s study provides insights of identifying tools that LCTL instructors and learners perceive to foster self-access and autonomy.

Classroom based approach is one of the strategy used to foster autonomy. In this approach, many people question the role of the teacher in promoting autonomy among students. In her article “Blogging: promoting learner autonomy and intercultural competence through study abroad” Lee (2011) investigated how asynchronous computer-mediated communication (CMC) via blogs and face-to-face (FTF) interaction supports autonomous learning. The researcher conducted ethnographic interviews with native speakers of the target language and 16 American undergraduate students who participated in blogs to develop their intercultural competence over the course of a semester. Study findings revealed that blogs enabled students to work independently and reflect on cross-cultural issues.

Lee (2011) makes a crucial observation that; students appeared to rely on the teacher’s guidance and feedback when doing critical reflection. Most of them were not able to articulate their points of view because they were cognitively challenged by the task. The researcher concludes that task type fostered autonomy in different ways. Lee speculates that free topics gave students more control of their learning while teacher assigned topics required a lot of effort. This observation relies mainly on the researcher’s
interpretation; it would be interesting investigate what participants’ perspectives their points of view.

Scholars have used online support systems to support language learners who want to learn autonomously. Darasawang and Reinders (2010) are among the scholars who have explored this alternative to encourage autonomy. The researchers conducted a small study that involves the implementation of a new institutional online language support system in an academic English class at a Thai University. The system was designed to aid and encourage out-of-class learning and development of autonomous skills. Findings reveal that fewer students used the system in limited ways. However, the researchers identify possible problems that might have contributed to a smaller number using the system. Most students did not know features in the systems that could foster their autonomy, and neither did the instructors state explicitly the aims and rationale of the systems to the learners. Do instructors really have to set the aims and rationale for using online resources? The current study seeks to investigate what instructors and students think about the same.

In “Developing collaborative autonomous learning abilities in computer-mediated language-learning” Kessler and Bikowski (2010) investigated 40 non-native speakers (NNS) pre-service instructors of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) as they collaboratively constructed a wiki in a 16-week online course. The researchers’ goal was to give attention to both individual and group behavior while the entire process was underway. The aim of their study was to determine how learners formed meaning as well as their collaborative autonomous language-learning abilities. Learners demonstrated
abilities of learning a language independently by contributing personal meanings and benefiting from group members. A replication of some aspects of Kessler and Bikowski study, particularly in LCTLs might give some insights of implementing the same in LCTLs.

When investigating the role of instructors in promoting autonomous language-learning with technology outside the classroom, Lai, Yeung & Hu (2015) found mismatches between instructors’ and students’ perceptions of the degree of involvement and specific roles instructors play. Students, in their view, expect instructors to play a major role in supporting autonomous language-learning using technology by recommending varied technological resources and sharing strategies for effective use of resources. On the other hand, instructors overestimated the abilities of their students, and considered they having a minimal role in promoting learner autonomy. The instructors expressed concerns over their limited ability to provide support to their students; these observations are consistent with the current research findings on the role of the teacher in promoting autonomy (Lee, 2011; Darasawang & Reinders, 2010). This study was conducted at a university in Hong Kong where interviews were conducted with both language learners and instructors of English as a second language. Since most studies have investigated the role of the teacher in promoting autonomous learning, the current study will examine from the instructors’ perspectives their experiences in promoting autonomy. I will specifically focus on LCTLs because it is a unique population and phenomenon that most studies appear forgotten.
In another study, Sibel (2015) sought to evaluate an English language teaching education program at a university in Turkey. Her aim was to evaluate how instructors promoted their autonomy in language teaching. The researcher analyzed documents and conducted semi-structured interviews with seven program educators. First, she investigated catalogues described in the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) of the program through the European Profile for Language Teacher Education (EPLTE) followed by interviews with educators who had experience with the program. Using a checklist, the researcher analyzed items that were directly related to development of teacher autonomy in the framework. Only eight items were found consisted with of autonomy development discussed earlier in the review (Țurloiu & Stefánsdóttir, 2011; Kessler & Bikowski, 2010; Reinders, 2010; Levy & Stockwell, 2006). Findings revealed that ECTS program supported teacher autonomy by encouraging instructors to learn the target culture autonomously.

The main purpose of this review was to examine theoretical aspects of learner autonomy from the constructivist view, how it is related to other concepts such as CALL and LCTLs. The review also outline a number of previous and current studies related to learner autonomy.

**Concluding Comments**

In this chapter, I conducted a review of literature relevant to my guiding research questions. The aim was not only to inform my readers about theoretical concepts related to the concept of learner autonomy but also to offer my readers with a general overview of how the processes of data collection, analysis, and synthesis would unfold. First, I
provided an overview of learner autonomy; philosophical perspectives, ways of
promoting learner autonomy, and benefits of learner autonomy. Secondly, I discussed
how CALL promotes learner autonomy in other commonly taught languages. Lastly, I
discussed current and previous studies related to learner autonomy and other languages
particularly LCTLs. The goal of this literature review was to sync current and previous
research on learner autonomy and to identify the research gap consistent with changing
pedagogical trend and emerging technology trend in the 21st century.
Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework of Model

Framework of Learner Autonomy Development

This section provides an overview of the framework for developing autonomy in foreign language-learning. Littlewood’s learner autonomy framework is informed by constructivism theory. Constructivism begins with the premise that the human world is different from the natural, physical world and therefore must be studied differently (Magana, 2002, p. 2). Human beings have evolved the capacity to interpret and construct reality (Thorne, Kirkham & O'Flynn-Magee, 2004; Bandura, 2001). Human beings are different from the natural, physical world and therefore must be studied differently (Magana, 2002; Patton, 2002). Patton further notes that human perceptions are not physically real in an absolute sense; they are shaped by cultural and linguistic constructs but can be perceived and experienced by real people. Learning is viewed as an active process in which learners construct new ideas or concepts based on previous or current knowledge (Brandon & All, 2010; Rüschoff & Ritter, 2001; Bruner, 1996). The learner selects and transforms information, constructs hypotheses, and makes decisions. A constructivist classroom is learner-centered, and the role of the teacher is to provide students with the opportunities of hypothesizing, predicting, manipulating objects, posing questions, researching, investigating, imagining, and inventing. The teacher’s role is that of a facilitator (Gray, 1997, part I, para 1). The following principles guide constructivist thinking in learning (Hein, 1991).

Many scholars agree that constructivism emphasize learning and not teaching, encourage learner autonomy and personal involvement in learning (Benson, 2013; Wang,
2011; Bruner, 1996; Little, 1995;). According to Littlewood (1996), “All genuinely successful learning is in the end autonomous” (p. 19). Littlewood defines an autonomous person as one who has an independent capacity to make and carry out the choices, which governs his or her actions (p. 428). Littlewood proposes a framework for developing student autonomy as illustrated in Figure 1. The framework shows two components: ability (knowledge and skills) and willingness (motivation and confidence).

![Figure 1](image-url)  
**Figure 1.** Framework for developing autonomy for foreign language-learning (Littlewood, 1991, p. 432).

This framework supports language use in variety of settings and identifies three roles of an autonomous individual (person, communicator, and learner) (Kessler & Bikowski, 2010; Littlewood, 1996;). Littlewood describes the three roles as follows:
1) Autonomy as a communicator depends on (a) the ability to use the language creatively; and (b) the ability to use appropriate strategies for communication meanings in specific situations.

2) Autonomy as a learner depends on (a) the ability to engage in independent work (e.g., self-directed learning); and (b) the ability to use appropriate learning strategies, both inside and outside the classroom.

3) Autonomy as a person depends (in the foreign language-learning context) on (a) the ability to express personal meanings; and (b) the ability to create personal learning contexts, e.g., through interacting outside the classroom (Littlewood, 1996, p. 431).

While acknowledging the importance of these roles to autonomous individuals, this study investigated participants’ description of learner autonomy and an examination of the strategies used to promote learning autonomy in Swahili as a less commonly taught language. Through interviews, the researcher’s aim was to describe participants’ experiences of teaching and learning Swahili in a mid-sized midwestern university in the U.S.

Learning in the 21st Century appears to have changed in many aspects. In the subsequent section, I discuss how new technology has significantly influenced learning pedagogy and its impact on learner autonomy. The first part is a description of the 21st century learning framework, followed by a discussion of the 21st century competences and how they influence learner autonomy.
Framework for 21st Century Learning

The advent of technology in the 21st century has advanced learning significantly. Technology has influenced the ways people communicate, learn, work and live (O’Connor, McDonald & Ruggiero, 2014; Garrison, 2011). Many scholars claim that modern technology encourages students to have positive interdependence, individual accountability, and abundant interaction (Czerkawski, 2015; Yang, Wang, Tsai & Wang, 2015). The 21st century learning appears to reshape the use of computers for language-learning. Computers are no longer tools for information processing and display but also tools for information processing and communication (Mattern & Floerkemeier, 2010; Gündüz, 2005; Warschauer & Healey, 1998). Gündüz clarifies that computers are not good teaching tools on their own, but they can be effective depending on how the teacher and students use them.

Teaching and learning in the 21st century will focus on student outcomes (specific skills, content, knowledge, expertise, and literacies) with innovative support systems that help learners to master multiple abilities required in the 21st century (Partnership for 21st Century Skills - http://www.p21.org/about-us/p21-framework/61). Mastery of these skills requires relatively efficient support systems. The four suggested support systems include: standards and assessment, curriculum and instruction, professional development, and learning environments (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Today’s life and work requires individuals to navigate complex life and work environments that are competitive, information rich, and require adequate skills to overcome the challenge of organizing and utilizing that information (Czerkawski, 2015; Latham & Gross, 2014; Trilling & Fadel,
2009). It is therefore necessary to acquire relevant learning skills that facilitates successful attainment of learning goals in when navigation in information-rich environments.

According to Partnership for 21st Century Skills coalition, 21st century learning environment:

1. Creates learning practices, human support and physical environments that will support the teaching and learning of the 21st century skill outcomes;
2. Supports professional learning communities that enable educators to collaborate, share best practices and integrate 21st century skills to classroom practice;
3. Enables students to learn in relevant, real world 21st century contexts (e.g., through project – based or other applied work);
4. Allows equitable access to quality learning tools, technologies and resources.
5. Provides 21st century architectural and interior designs for group, team and individual learning; and

In view of the above six characteristics, research shows that the world is moving relatively fast towards ubiquitous connectivity that will change how people associate, gather and share information, and consume media (Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhart, & Madden, 2015; Fox & Rainie, 2014; Pan, Paul & Jain, 2011). Changes brought about by
new technology require learners to be active and productive contributors to society (O’Connor, McDonald & Ruggiero, 2014; Johnson et al., 2014; Drucker, 2011).

**Phenomenological Research Design**

Phenomenological research is a qualitative research approach that focuses on exploring how human beings make sense of experience into consciousness, both individually and as a shared meaning (Vagle, 2014; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). In order to gather information of how people experience a phenomenon, a carefully chosen methodology is required to capture how people perceive, describe, feel, judge, remember, and make sense of a phenomenon (Patton, 2002, 2008). McLeod (2011) describes that such data can be gathered through “verbal or written protocols describing the lived experience” (p. 89). One undertakes “in-depth interviews with people who have directly experienced the phenomenon of interest; that is, they have a lived experience as opposed to secondhand experience” (Patton, 2002, p. 104).

Lived experience is “anything that presents itself to consciousness, whatever falls outside of consciousness falls outside the bounds of lived experience (Van Manen, 2015, p. 9). Lived experiences are recollected; it is a reflection on experience that is already passed or lived through (Van Manen, 1990, p. 9). The purpose of phenomenology is to use individual experiences to form a universal understanding (Van Manen, 2015, Creswell & Clark, 2007; Van Manen, 1990).

Phenomenological research attempts to describe the subjective experience of the participants by following a procedure in which units of meaning are identified and common themes integrated in a detailed description of the phenomenon in order to
represent it from the perspective of the research participants (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2013; Creswell, 2013; Tesch, 2013). This study explored the common experiences of teaching and learning strategies, and use of resources by LCTL instructors and students who aim to promote learner autonomy in their activities.

This can be conducted through open-ended questionnaires, journals, interviews, discussions, and participant observations (Vagle 2014; Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). The nature of this inquiry is based on a constructivistic worldview. Contrary to positivists, phenomenologists believe that “a researcher cannot be detached from his/her presuppositions and that the researcher should not pretend otherwise” (Hammersley, 2000 as cited in Groenewald, 2004, p. 7). This research investigated the subjective meaning individuals place on their experiences of learner autonomy (Creswell, 2014). Multiple constructions and interpretations of meaning change over time; the goal of a researcher is to understand what individual interpretations are at a particular time and context (Creswell, 2013; Charmaz, 2003; Thompson, 1994). Applying this approach, with learner autonomy as the central construct, this research will focus on LCTL instructors and students and how they directly experience learner autonomy; “how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others” (Patton, 2002, p. 104). The following section will provide an overview of phenomenology and its philosophical underpinnings.

**Philosophical Background**

Phenomenology has its origins in Ancient Greek philosophy. Phenomenology is derived from the Greek words *Phenomenon* (to appear, to flare up, to show itself) and
logos (reason or word, thus called a ‘reasoned inquiry’ (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenological research is grounded in the philosophy of Husserl (1931–1973) and Heidegger (1962). Husserl (1931–1973) regarded experience the fundamental source of knowledge. According to Husserl, the aim of phenomenology is the rigorous and unbiased study of things, as they appear in order to arrive at an essential understanding of human consciousness and experience (Bullington & Karlsson, 1984; Dowling, 2007). In lieu of this, he introduced the concept of phenomenological reduction. That is, not imposing explanations but describing experiences in an unbiased natural, critical way before holding that knowledge judgmentally (Van Manen, 2015; Dowling, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). Heidegger (1962) revised Husserl’s idea by including the ethical aspect (Dowling, 2007). Heidegger believes that “phenomena are directed from subjects out into the world; they come into being and in a language as humans relate with things and one another” (Vagle, 2014, p. 39).

According to these two philosophies of Husserl and Heidegger, “phenomenology is the study of the lifeworld—the world we immediately experience it pre-reflectively rather than as we conceptualize, categorize, or reflect on it” (Van Manen, 2015, p. 9). Phenomenology explores experience as it is lived rather than how it is conceptualized (Van Manen, 2015; 1990). Husserl regarded experience the fundamental source of knowledge (Dowling, 2007). According to Husserl, the aim of phenomenology is the rigorous and unbiased study of things, as they appear in order to arrive at an essential understanding of human consciousness and experience (Van Manen, 2015; Dowling, 2007). Phenomenology reveals meanings embedded in situations and uncovers
possibilities from data, rather than drawing inferences from data (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994; Schneider & Wagemann, 2010). In the following section, I will describe the processes a researcher follows when trying to examine experiences of participants on a phenomenon.

**Phenomenological Processes**

This study utilized epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis to understand and derive meaning about the perceptions instructors and students of LCTLs hold about learner autonomy, and how learner autonomy is experienced in a LCTL context.

**Epoche.**

Epoche is a crucial consideration in this research, in the epoche, “we set aside our prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas about things” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). I bracketed myself out of the study by describing my personal experiences with the phenomenon of learner autonomy (Creswell, 2013). This allowed me to focus mainly on the experiences of the participants. It is not likely that all traces of personal experience can be removed; epoche challenges researchers to be transparent to themselves and allow whatever comes to disclose itself in a naive and open manner (Van Manen, 2015; Moustakas, 1994; Vagle, 2014). Acknowledging that the traces exist is important to the research process and the researcher. My familiarity level with the phenomenological construct of learner autonomy, particularly in LCTLs is relatively high. I previously taught Swahili at college level both in the U.S. and abroad. In using epoche as a process, I was able to check my biases and eliminate my personal involvement with the subject by
bracketing my experiences as explained in chapter 1. Moustakas (1994) explains that epoche process requires everything in the ordinary, everyday sense of knowledge to be tabled out and put into action but the experiencing person remains present. “I … still exist as the doubter and negator of everything (Husserl, 1970, as cited in Moustakas, 1994, p. 87). Epoche challenges me to be in a pure state that requires for fresh perceiving and experiencing, and not viewed through my preconceived ideas and prior experiences discussed in my role as a researcher.

**Phenomenological reduction.**

The process involves describing in textual language what one sees between the phenomenon and self. It is an analytical process where the researcher ‘brackets out’ the world and presuppositions to identify the data in pure form, uncontaminated by extraneous intrusions (Patton, 2002, p. 485). Once I have collected data through interviewing and memoing, I identified key phrases and statements that speak directly to the phenomenon, interpreted the meaning of these phrases as an informed reader, inspected the meaning for what they reveal about the phenomenon of study, and then offered a tentative statement, or definition of the phenomenon (Van Manen, 2015; Vagle, 2014; Moustakas, 1994). Data was bracketed and treated with equal value “horizonalized” (Patton, 2002, p. 486), and then organized into meaningful clusters, combining significant statements into emerging themes.

**Imaginative variation.**

This process required me to: utilize imagination, vary frames of reference, employ polarities and reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from different perspectives,
positions, roles, or functions (Moustakas, 1994). According to Moustakas (1994), “the aim is to arrive at structural descriptions of an experience, the underlying factors and precipitating factors of what is being experienced” (p. 98).

**Synthesis.**

The final process involved “an integration of the composite textual and structural descriptions, providing a synthesis of the meanings and essences of the experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 144). I organized a narrative description of what the participants experienced in relation to learner autonomy in LCTLs. Creswell (2013) recommends that I provide a description of the context and setting that influenced how participants experienced the phenomenon. This is the section where I presented a picture of the lived experience of instructors and students of LCTLs as it relates to their perceived experiences of learner autonomy in LCTL context.

**Choice of the Research Design**

After considering a number of research designs, I decided the best fit for this study is a phenomenological approach. The focus of this investigation is the experiences of LCTL instructors and students on the phenomenon of learner autonomy. Most studies have investigated teacher and student autonomy from an outsider’s perspective (Collentine, 2011; Joshi, 2011; Kessler & Bikowski, 2010; Lee, 2011; Posada, 2006). This study considered that autonomy would best be studied by foregrounding the voice of LCTL instructors and students. The goal was not to create a theory but to understand the phenomenon from the perspectives of both instructors and students of LCTLs. I believe that the most effective way to achieve this goal is exploring this phenomenon as a lived
experience in order to discover the essence of what it means to be autonomous in the context of LCTLs.

**Strategies for Establishing Rigor and Credibility**

Tracy (2010) describes credibility as trustworthiness, verisimilitude, and plausibility of research findings (p. 842). The quality of any research depends on this credibility regardless of the school of thought a researcher comes from. Many scholars, particularly quantitative researchers (positivists) question trustworthiness of qualitative research; they question validity and reliability of qualitative research (Kvale, & Brinkmann, 2009). The quantitative researchers claim that qualitative research criteria represent a different philosophical perspective that is subjective and not realist in nature (Devers, 1999). Validity and reliability are commonly used to address concerns of quantitative research, that is, generalizing random samples to a wider populationFarrokhi & Mahmoudi-Hamidabad, 2012; Tracy, 2010; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). The same does not apply in qualitative inquiry because the qualitative research focus is on understanding complexities of human experience in their natural context (Baxter & Eyles, 1997; Koch, 2006; Shenton, 2004). Most naturalists have distanced themselves from the positivists’ claims by incorporating measures in order to address the problem.

Many naturalistic investigators propose a different criterion for ensuring validity and reliability of research findings in a qualitative inquiry (Koch, 2006; Shenton, 2004; Tobin & Begley, 2004; Whittemore, Chase & Mandle, 2001; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). For example, Guba & Lincoln (1989) suggest the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability in pursuit of trustworthiness. This criterion has widely
been accepted by researchers for ensuring rigor in qualitative research. This study applied credibility techniques; describing and interpreting the phenomena of interest from the participants’ view (Long & Johnson, 2000; Shenton, 2004). The following credibility techniques were used in this study: Member checking, researcher reflexivity, peer debriefing, rich and thick description, and reflexive journaling (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Patton, 2002; Shenton, 2004).

**Purposeful sampling.**

Participant’s selection plays a significant role in enhancing the credibility of a study (Kratochwill & Levin, 2014; 2010; Tracy, 2010; Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) suggests two strategies for recruiting participants: purposeful and random sampling; Patton (2002) describes that cases are selected because they are ‘information rich’ and illuminative, that is, they offer useful manifestation of the phenomenon of interest (p. 40). In this study, I purposefully selected a sample of less commonly taught languages (LCTL’s) because few studies, if any, have been initiated or conducted in these languages.

Specifically, this study focused on Swahili as a less commonly taught language. Although we have other LCTLS such as Russian, Chinese, Arabic, among others, I chose to focus on Swahili because of the following reasons: First, all LCTLS have similar characteristics such as, level of difficulty, proficiency expectation is high, and learning resources, and web footprints are scarce and so Swahili will fairly be representative sample. Secondly, less commonly taught languages “do not mean not widely taught or fewer learners of the language” (Robin. 2013, p. 305). The number of learners and
teachers does not affect underrepresentation or overrepresentation of any kind. Lastly, the convenience of accessing the sample influenced the choice of Swahili sample.

**Member checking.**

This is the most important step in bolstering the credibility of a study (Creswell, 2013; Tracy, 2010; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Long and Johnson (2000) posit that checking results on completion of data collection with the respondents ensures the credibility of data collected. Creswell (2012) explains that credibility of a study is also bolstered if participants can evaluate whether emerging themes accurately represents their experiences and observations. In this study, a three-stage member check was conducted. First, I asked participants to read the transcribed interviews to check their accuracy. Secondly, I asked participants to verify researcher’s emerging themes and inferences formed during the dialogue (Roberts, 2013; Shenton, 2004;). And lastly, the third round involved checking with participants with a goal of confirming, refuting, or clarifying the final results and implications of the research.

**Thick, rich description.**

Thick, rich description provides a foundation for qualitative analysis and reporting (Yilmaz, 2013; Polit & Beck, 2010; Patton, 2002). A fairly good description takes the reader into the setting being described (Hammersley, 2016; Van Maanen, 2011; Tracy, 2010). This may be achieved by including sufficient description and direct quotations to allow the reader to enter into the situation and thoughts of the people represented in the report (Yilmaz, 2013; Tracy, 2010; Finlay, 2006). Patton (2002) insists that thick description is more than recording what people do. Thick description involves a
presentation of detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships; this
description eventually evokes emotionality and self-feelings. “The purpose of thick
description is to create verisimilitude, statements that produce for the readers the feeling
that they have experienced, or could experience, the events being described in a study”
(Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 129). In order to facilitate myself to capture all the details
during the research process, I kept updating an inventory of the phenomenon of interest
throughout my research journey.

**Peer debriefing.**

A peer debrief is the review of the data and the research process by someone who
is familiar with the research or the phenomenon being explored (Creswell & Miller,
2000). Constant discussions with my advisor and peers widened my experiences and
perceptions. In my case, having a reviewer provided me with support, and at the same
time getting challenged on my assumptions pushed me to the next level methodologically
(Hail, Hurst & Camp, 2011; Hawker, Durkin & Hawker, 2011). In this study, the
following were my peer debriefs support: program colleagues (Instructional Technology
program); graduate writing center; and finally, my program advisor. This procedure was
aimed at providing feedback to me or simply served as a soundboard of ideas from the
research process. Many scholars concur that seeking assistance of peer debriefers, and
researchers add credibility to the study (Creswell, 2013; Silverman, 2010; Creswell &
Miller, 2000; Long & Johnson, 2000).
Researcher Reflexivity

Being reflexive involves self-questioning and self-understanding (Starfield, 2013; Tracy, 2010; Patton, 2002). “Reflexivity reminds the researcher to be attentive to and conscious of the cultural, political, social, linguistic, and ideological origins, of one’s own perspective and voice as well as the perspectives and voices of those one interviews and those to whom one reports” (Patton, 2002, p. 65). Researcher reflexivity is a validity procedure where researchers self-disclose their assumptions, beliefs, and biases that may shape their inquiry (Cousin, 2010; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Moustakas, 1994). Reflexivity allows readers to understand researchers position, and bracket or suspend those biases as the study continues (Tufford & Newman, 2012; McLeod, 2011; Moustakas, 1994). In chapter one, I provided information about my past experiences, biases, and prejudices that might have influenced the interpretation of the phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2012; Tracy, 2010; Moustakas, 1994). I tried to exercise neutrality and impartiality by keeping a journal of events and evaluating those events in order to avoid bias.

Researcher Positionality

In qualitative research, the researcher is considered an instrument of data collection (Tracy, 2010; Creswell, 2012; Patton, 2002). This means that data collection is mediated through a so-called “human instrument” as opposed to inventories, questionnaires, or machines used in quantitative research. In order to validate this human instrument as a data collection tool, researchers need to describe their past experiences, biases, and prejudices (Charmaz, 2014; Creswell, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). Readers
deserve to understand the background of the data collector in order to understand the data collected.

I have long had a passion for working with people and helping them overcome challenges of using technology. I discovered this passion when I enrolled at Kenyatta university, Nairobi, Kenya for my Bachelor’s degree in 2000. At that time, my peers would consult me on some technology issues because of the enthusiasm I had for the topic. After graduating, I taught Swahili in a high school for close to three years. It was through this job that I discovered how learners often struggle to learn in an environment that is characterized by a lack of learning resources. I spent time in an ill-equipped library, coaching my students how to do library searches and gathering teaching materials. This was when I discovered that I had a passion for helping people become independent learners.

In 2007, I went to graduate school to pursue the Master of Education (Language Education) degree at the Department of Communication Technology and Education at a Kenyan university. As a graduate student and research assistant, I became involved with several language-related projects, including the development of Swahili learning materials and the authoring of dozens of Swahili poems aimed at developing language learners’ competency. After completing this degree, I came to the U.S. to study Applied Linguistics.

I obtained admission to study Applied Linguistics at Ohio University in 2010, and I knew that this admission would change my approach to many issues. First, I vividly knew that I became first a global citizen, second, an international student, and last, a
linguist and a technologist. Furthermore, I understood the importance of becoming independent and autonomous in all aspects of scholarship in a developed world, even before I arrived. My previous experience as a teacher positioned me strategically to note coping mechanisms for a graduate student in a new environment and culture. My aim was to gain a sneak preview from online resources in order to avoid the pain of coming blindly to the world I only saw on movies. My autonomous learning prepared me to overcome all the anxiety and culture shock, although, of course, after a period of adjustment.

When I embarked on my Applied Linguistics program, it was soon clear that I had a strong interest in Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) courses and projects. I successfully executed most of those projects with ease. I felt that my future was predominantly dependent on the technological skills I would acquire, and therefore decided to pursue a Ph.D. in Instructional Technology in Education to further my technological knowledge and skill.

Currently, I am the assistant director of a language resource center at a midwestern university, where I maintain daily operations of the center, collaborate with other Instructional Technology specialists to organize weekly technology workshops for faculty and teaching assistants, and design and maintain several websites in and out of the department. The center has offered me opportunities to make connections, build relationships, and solve people’s frustrations related to integrating technology into their teaching. This career choice was not by default, but instead adds to my multidisciplinary vision of helping people to become autonomous in their respective areas of study.
Looking back, my experiences have definitely informed me as an instructional technologist, a linguist, a teacher, and a researcher. As I conducted this research, I was perceptive to all these biases. One bias is that the choice of this topic was facilitated by my passion in teaching Swahili as a less commonly taught language. I understood that this passion might influence the nature of data I was gathering. However, to avoid bias, I had to explicate myself from personal reactions, reflections, and past insights. I kept a separate journal in order to exhibit how bracketing took place in the process (Greenbank, 2003). In addition, I knew my participants very well, since most of them are my friends and colleagues with whom I have shared some prior teaching experiences and grown together professionally by attending various conferences related to LCTLs and technology. Like me, my instructor participants come from East Africa, specifically Kenya and Tanzania. They share relatively the same culture and worldviews as I do and are also native speakers of Swahili. For these reasons, I knew they understood my positionality with regard to technology and learning. Throughout my interview, I avoided the use of the word “technology” in my interviews but rather focused on learner autonomy.

As a good researcher, I questioned my thinking; for instance, assuming that all instructors use the same strategies to promote learner autonomy in language-teaching. I originally thought instructors would use the same tools that I use to teach, motivate, or mentor learners. As a result, I learned to recognize the individuality of the participants and examined my assumptions. In the following section, I will discuss ethical considerations that I made during this research process.
Ethical Considerations

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) officially approved this research. To ensure research ethics, I made use of participants’ informed consent (Creswell, 2012; Patton, 2002). I explicitly explained to my participants the nature and purpose of my research before participation, and they expressed their consent verbally and by way of signing the consent form with a valid signature. In the consent form, I informed my participants that research participation is voluntary and that they could opt out at any time in the research process.

Data gathering design and procedures were completely open for discussion with my research participants. All the gathered information was considered private and confidential. The participants’ names were disguised using pseudonyms to protect the identity of my participants. When reporting my research findings, I ensured that my data accurately represented what I observed through member checking.

I entered the research field as an educational technologist and a Swahili native speaker and a prior language instructor. This might have affected the outcomes of my research problem because my previous experience entailed empowering language instructors to utilize technology in promoting their teaching autonomy. I also participated as an associate director of the language resource center in one of the research settings. The privileged status of the researcher could have influenced the kind of responses that the research participants provided by either emphasizing more on technology and/or ignoring other aspects of my research problem.
This study also sought to ensure that the research product was consistent with the gathered data. In order to achieve this goal, I utilized peer debriefing, member checks, and memoing. I provided precise research methods to used and relatively clear research procedures, sequence, and findings connected to data collected with a fairly clear audit trail. Because the interviews were conversational and open-ended, I clarified misconceptions as they occurred, accepted and supported open disclosures whenever they occurred (Vagle, 2014; Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Additionally, I provided my research participants with an opportunity to review and confirm or alter the research data to corresponding to participants’ perception of the experience.

Lastly, I used reflexivity to check on my potential negative bias due to contextual circumstances I find myself in relation to the research problem. I utilized my previous experience as a music performer and poet to build rapport with research participants, to build trust and engage freely through sharing their language-learning experiences and teaching and learning autonomy.

**Research Assumptions**

**Axiological assumptions.**

Axiological assumptions are values and apriori understanding that the researcher brings to the study (Creswell, 2013). Van Manen (1990) warns that a researcher can only study a phenomenon by suspending his prior knowledge, understanding, and experience of that phenomenon. In this study, I bracketed myself through the process of phenomenological reduction I discussed earlier.
Ontological assumptions.

Ontology is “the study of being” (Crotty, 2003, p. 10). It is concerned with “what kind of world we are investigating, with the nature of existence, with the structure of reality as such” (Crotty, 2003, p. 10). Ontological assumptions are based on subjective reports of multiple realities of participants; each participant is different and views their experiences differently (Creswell, 2013). By interpreting multiple realities of LCTL instructors and students, I believe that I understood various meaning and essences of research participants.

Epistemological assumptions.

Epistemology is “a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know” (Crotty, 2003, p. 3). This study gathered data by interviewing instructors and students of LCTLs and memoing of interpretations. I assembled subjective evidence, based on individual views of the participants (Creswell, 2013). By and large, it is impossible to generalize knowledge from findings, but insights may crucial to my readers who will have a potential to transfer their observations to other populations or contexts.

Methodological assumptions.

Methodology “is the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of the methods to the desired outcomes” (Crotty, 2003, p. 3). Methodological assumptions of a study are “inductive, emerging and shaped by the researcher collecting and analyzing the data” (Creswell, 2013, p. 22). Van Manen (1990) notes that the process of gathering data is responsive to unfolding avenues of inquiry the researcher gains through reflection and
data collection. In this study, I analyzed data to develop a detailed understanding of the phenomenon of autonomy from the perspective of LCTL instructors and students.

The preliminary aim of this research was to gather data regarding perspectives of LCTL instructors and students about the phenomenon of autonomy in LCTLs in a mid-sized midwestern university. My epistemological position regarding this study is that: (a) data is contained within the perspectives of participants that are involved with the phenomenon of autonomy in LCTLs, and (b) because of this reason, to engage with my participants in collecting data.

**Concluding Comments**

This chapter provided a conceptual framework and design that guided the entire research process. This framework was a blueprint to my research because it served as a starting point in exploring the experiences of instructors and students in the context of teaching and learning LCTLs in a mid-sized midwestern university in the U.S. The conceptual framework and design in this study provided relevant theoretical tools for designing the research questions and subsequent data gathering process (Charmaz, 2006; Maxwell, 2012). As noted in chapter 1, this research is an extension of research in learner autonomy in LCTLs but grounded on a phenomenological research paradigm.
Chapter 4: Methodology

The purpose of this study is to investigate the phenomenon of autonomy in LCTLs by examining the experiences of instructors and students of LCTLs. This study applied Littlewood’s (1991) framework for developing autonomy for foreign language learning as informed by the constructivism theory. A transcendental phenomenological approach was used to investigate the experiences of LCTL instructors and students at a mid-sized midwestern university in the U.S. A transcendental approach focuses on the description of the experiences of participants. Researchers engage in what is known as “bracketing” by setting aside their own experiences in order to take a fresh perspective towards the phenomenon of study (Vagle, 2014; Van Maanen, 2011; Moustakas, 1994;). The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do LCTL instructors and learners describe the phenomena of learner autonomy?
2. What strategies do LCTL instructors and students use to promote learner autonomy?

Recruitment of Research Participants

Hycner (1999) claims, “the phenomenon dictates the method (and not the other way round) including even the type of participants” (p. 156). Therefore, in this study, I identified and recruited research participants by using purposeful sampling techniques consistent with phenomenological design. Researchers use purposive sampling if their research is intended to enhance the understanding of the selected participants’ experiences (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Devers & Frankel, 2000;). Purposive
sampling ensures selecting of information-rich cases and it is a non-representative subset of some large population, constructed to serve a very specific need or purpose (Cohen & Arieli, 2011; Suri, 2011; Tongco, 2007). This method of sampling was considered important in this study because many researchers recommend it as the most important kind of non-probability sampling for identifying participants of a phenomenological study (Suri, 2011; Coyne, 1997; Patton, 1990). A phenomenological study requires participants to have experience of a phenomenon of interest (Van Manen, 2015; Giorgi, 2012; Connelly, 2010) in this case, they ought to have been instructors or students of Swahili as a LCTL. Based on this reason, I employed theoretical sampling strategy that focused on a narrower sample. Theoretical sampling is a process that involves selection of “incidents, slices of life, time periods, or people on the basis of their potential manifestation or representation of important theoretical constructs” (Patton, 2002, p. 238). I used this strategy with a goal of developing a rich understanding of the phenomenon across a range of settings and conditions (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and selected the sample based on my judgment and research purposes (Ellis, 2010; Meyers, Gamst & Guarino, 2006; Tsang, Colley & Lynd, 2009; Wiersma & Jurs, 2003; Greig & Taylor, 1999; Hinkle, Schwandt, 1997).

I specifically looked for participants who had the following characteristics: (a) instructors who had taught Swahili for at least two years in a university in the U.S., and (b) university students who had studied Kiswahili for at least three years in the U.S. Initially, I planned to utilize a sample of 10 participants but during data collection, and analysis, saturation was reached. Saturation is “the point in data collection and analysis
when new information produces little or no change to the codebook” (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006, p.65). I ended up interviewing a total of 9 participants: five Swahili instructors and four Swahili learners. In a phenomenological study, a minimum of five and maximum of 25 participants is recommended (Boyd, 2001; Creswell, 1998; Morse, 1994). The selection of these information-rich cases was influenced by the need to gain a greater insight and in-depth understanding (Patton, 2002).

After identifying potential participants, I contacted them via email (see Appendix C) to explain the purpose of my research and their expected role. I obtained a signed consent from all participants for this study.

During data transcriptions, I de-identified my research data using Swahili pseudonyms I used the following Swahili pseudonyms: Jasiri, Zakia, Latifah, Almasi, Hazina, Haki, Adimu, Najma, and Fatuma. I will discuss further these participants in Chapter 5 of this study.

Participants

As stated above, the research participants were identified and recruited using purposeful sampling techniques consistent with the nature of the phenomenon. The instructor participants are native speakers of Swahili from East Africa (Ghana, Kenya, and Tanzania). To attain maximum variation and gather rich description, the instructor participants’ age, gender, and experience varied. They have been in the U. S. for varying amounts of time, and as such, their years of experience teaching are also varied accordingly; the one with the least number of years in the U.S. has taught Swahili for two years, and the participant with the greatest number of years in the U.S. has been teaching
Swahili for more than 10 years in U.S. colleges. The majority of the instructor participants came to study applied linguistics while teaching Swahili to American students. I interviewed three male and two female instructors. The other participants, three females and one male, were former students of Swahili. Most of the former students of Swahili had studied Swahili for at least two years and then pursued their interest in East Africa for a varied number of years. The following is a table showing demographics of my participants.

Table 1

*Participants’ Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adimu</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Ghanaian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatuma</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almasi</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haki</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Kenyan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazina</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Kenyan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasiri</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Tanzanian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latifah</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Kenyan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Najma</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zakia</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Kenyan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Gathering**

Phenomenological studies seek to understand and derive the meaning of a phenomenon from the perspective of the participant (Creswell, 2007; Groenewald, 2004; Moustakas, 1994), and a researcher should allow data to emerge by asking about
participants’ experiences and letting them narrate those experiences (Seidman, 2013; Silverman, 2010). As a researcher, my role was to capture “rich descriptions of phenomena and their setting” (Kensit, 2000 as cited in Groenewald, 2004, p. 11).

Therefore, this study gathered data through interviewing and memoing. Data gathering began in October 2015 during the fifth week of the fall semester. Before this time, I met with each participant and explained the study, data gathering process, and my research timeline for completing the study. I used the fourth week of the semester to schedule interviews with my participants, and then collected data over the course of a six-week time period, between mid-October 2015 and February 2016.

**Semi-structured interviews.**

I conducted semi-structured, in-depth phenomenological interviews with both instructors and students of Swahili. In-depth semi-structured interviews are open interviews that allow new ideas to develop as a result of what the interviewee says (Kvale, 1996). They are well suited to explore people’s attitudes, values, beliefs, and motives, and can exhibit non-verbal indicators that may assist the researcher in evaluating truthfulness and validity (Van Teijlingen, 2014). The reason for choosing semi-structured interviews is to seek to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say. A flexible outline guides the interviewees’ leads and probes into emerging issues during the interview (Patton, 2002). The protocol enabled me to add prompts to prolong the interview conversation in order to help my research participants to elaborate, refine, confirm, and/or refute responses and my interpretations on emerging issues and findings (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011; Patton, 2002).
I interviewed each participant three times, and the questions reflected a phenomenological framework. The purpose of the first interview was to know the participant, build rapport, and establish his or her background. The second interview explored the concept of learner autonomy. The third interview was a follow-up for purposes of member checking and verification of emerging themes and inferences. The semi-structured in-depth interviews with each participant last between 20 to 60 minutes in the first interview, 30 to 90 minutes in the second interview, and 15 to 30 minutes in the third interview. The interview protocol can be found in Appendix F.

**Memoing.**

I also utilized memos in this study. Memos are the researcher’s field notes. The researcher records by writing what he hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data collection process (Van Maanen, 2011; Groenwald, 2004). Memos are important in mapping research activities, extracting meaning from the data, maintaining momentum, and opening communication (Birks & Mills, 2015; Birks, Chapman, & Francis, 2008). They also facilitate researcher reflexivity (Patton, 2002). By keeping notes, researchers can control their own subjectivity during data collection and interpretation (Creswell, 2013; Tracy, 2010; Primeau, 2003).

**Procedures.**

Table 2 below shows an overview and timeline of data gathering procedures. The study began in late October, 2015 during the fall semester and ended in late February, 2016 during the spring semester. I recruited participants during the last week of October, 2015. I explained the study to each participant individually and told them that they could
withdraw from the study anytime with no questions or consequences. No one withdrew from the study, but I opted not to interview the tenth participant due to data saturation. Eight of the interviews took place in a private office on campus, while the ninth took place via Skype because the participant had accepted a job offer in another state.

Throughout the data gathering process, I made memos and reflected in my personal journal about the process. I made three types of notes – theoretical, methodological, and analytical (described later in this chapter). I later sorted the memos according to cases and uploaded them to MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis tool, for further analysis.

Figure 2: Data gathering timeline.
**Data storage.**

With their permission, I audio-recorded my participants during the interviews. Each interview was assigned with a recording date and a pseudonym to protect the participants’ confidentiality. Each participant was recorded in a separate file and labeled with his or her pseudonym and date.

Memos, my secondary data, were written subsequent to each interview in as much detail as possible, based on most researchers that advice that memos should be written no later than the morning after the interview (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2014; Lofland & Lofland’s, 1995). In this study, I applied Schatzman and Strauss’s (1973) model, supplemented by Burgess (2002). I made four types of field notes:

- Observational notes (ON): “what happened notes” that are important for the researcher to make.
- Theoretical notes (TN): these are mostly the notes that a researcher makes when he thinks or reflects on experiences in an attempt to derive meaning.
- Methodological notes (MN): “reminders, instructions, or critique” to oneself on the process.
- Analytical memos (AM): end-of-a-field-day summary or progress reviews (Burgess, 2002).

**Data Analysis**

“Data analysis transforms data into findings” (Patton, 2002, p. 432). In this study, data analysis was guided by semi-structured interview questions and a search for patterns. The first step of this process involved transcription of data into a textual format and
cleaning it to eliminate noises and fillers such as coughs and “ums”. I delivered interview transcripts to individual participants who participated in the interview for member checking and correction of any inconsistencies that might have been in the data. Once participants reviewed the transcripts, they were returned to me for analysis. I saved individual transcripts with pseudonyms in a separate password-secured server to protect my participants’ confidentiality.

In this study, I used MAXQDA software, which is a qualitative data analysis tool. This software helped me to organize and categorize my data, transcribe audio files, retrieve information, create impressive illustrations and reports, and export reports (www.maxqda.com/products/maxqda). I transcribed the entire mp3 audio files for the first and second interviews in the MAXQDA transcriber and conducted follow-up member checking with my research participants before coding to ensure accuracy. The transcripts and audio files were arranged as illustrated in Figure 3 below.
Figure 3. Interview transcriptions data imported into MAXQDA interface.
I extensively used MAXQDA software, interview transcripts, and research memos for coding interview transcriptions and also for identifying emerging themes and descriptions of the phenomenon. The use of MAXQDA provided many analytical options. First, through MAXQDA, I was able to import documents, PDFs, and MP3 audio files and subsequently transcribe MP3 files using an inbuilt MAXQDA transcriber. Secondly, MAXQDA’s powerful and flexible coding options via drag and drop of data in all formats with use of colors and arrangement of specific codes in hierarchical order facilitated easy management of my data. This provided a platform for data comparison and engagement with data. MAXQDA enabled me to create and link memos to my data source or code or to chosen segments (Saillard, 2011). Additionally, MAXQDA has an important memoing tool, “comment”, that allows one to add small notes to individual codes.

In the MAXQDA interface, four windows are visible: Document System, Document Browser, Code System, and Retrieved Segments. MAXQDA enabled me to arrange the interface by revealing or hiding windows depending on the tasks being performed. See Figure 4 below.
Figure 4. MAXQDA interface.

MAXQDA has tools for linking audio with timestamps and linking text segments with media and other external sources, such as webpages. This feature provided me with an analytical storage base and ability to handle the data I gathered. The software also helped me to organize the data, evaluate, and code to broad categories (Moustakas, 1994). This enabled me to examine the phenomena as experienced by my participants, while at the same time systemize the data analysis process. Coding resulted in a vast data
bank that facilitated the development and integration of emerging concepts consistent with the phenomenological analysis process.

In this research, I applied Moustakas’s (1994) modification of van Kaam’s (1959, 1966) method of analysis. Before describing Moustakas’s modifications, I will briefly describe van Kaam’s original method. The van Kaam (1966) method had fewer steps for analyzing phenomenological data (Polit-O-Hara & Beck, 2006). The first two steps are identical in both versions; that is, listing and grouping of preliminary expressions, and reduction and elimination of overlapping and vague expressions. Subsequent steps in the original method required a researcher to write a hypothetical identification and description of the phenomenon being studied. Thereafter, a revision of the hypothesized description was conducted and then tested again to check whether it contained a moment of the experience. Finally, a random sample would be tested. If it passed the test successfully, the researcher could conclude that the moment of experience is valid.

In the following section, I will describe Moustakas’s modification of the van Kaam method of analyzing phenomenological data. Each of the steps in analyzing a transcribed interview are included.

**Modification of the van Kaam Method of Analysis of Phenomenological Data**

I executed the following steps using the complete transcript of each participant.

**Listing and preliminary grouping.**

I read through each participant’s transcripts once more and recorded some observations and reflections about the interview experience with the participant, utilizing the “comment” tool for making these memos in MAXQDA. This enabled me to get the
sense of a whole phenomenon. I re-read the transcripts and began to identify expressions relevant to the experience (horizon of experience) as shown in Figure 5. My goal was to list every expression relevant to the experience and be able to offer a conceptual understanding of the phenomenon (Van Manen, 2015; Moustakas, 1994).

Figure 5. Listing and preliminary grouping of themes.

Reduction and elimination.

The second step involved testing each expression to determine invariant constituents (a moment of experience that can be stated in exact terms). I tested for the following requirements: whether an expression had a moment of experience sufficient to understand it, and whether it was possible to abstract or label it (horizon of experience).
In this step, I eliminated all the overlapping, repetitive, and vague expressions to remain with invariant constituents of learner autonomy experience (Moustakas, 1994).

**Figure 6.** Horizon of experience phrases.

**Clustering and thematizing constituents.**

I examined the meaningful units or emerging themes and clustered them together according to their similarities. I highlighted, drag and dropped phrases in the MAXQDA code system window. I looked for patterns in the emerging themes and produced a structure that was helpful in depicting converging ideas.
Figure 7. Clustering and thematizing.

Final identification of the invariant constituents and themes.

In this stage I produced a table of themes. Figure 8 shows the structure of major themes and sub-themes. MAXQDA enabled me to both automatically and manually generate data visualizations. This facilitated me to view the data from a different perspective for new insights into understanding learner autonomy phenomena. The transcription resulted in tentative emerging issues and thematic relationships that further involved elucidation through member checking and follow-up interviews. The aim of seeking further clarification and member checking was to stimulate further reflection, confirm, or develop emerging themes and their thematic relationships.
Figure 8. Summary of invariant constituents and themes.

**Individual textual description.**

Using relevant, validated invariant constituents and themes, I constructed each participant’s Individual Textual Description of the experience, including verbatim examples from my transcribed interviews.
Individual structural description.

In this step I constructed an Individual Structural Description of the experience based on the individual textual description and imaginative variation.

Textual-structural description.

All the meanings and essences of the experience were constructed in this step. I incorporated the invariant constituents and themes to emerge with a detailed description of the phenomena. This process entailed constant reflection on the data during coding of interview transcripts. At any time when I observed a consistent theme or a new issue, I would revisit previously transcribed expressions of to compare and examine the similarities of their experiences of teaching and learning Swahili as a less commonly taught language in the U.S. I began to wind down data gathering and analysis at a “theoretical saturation” point (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, as cited in Bowen, 2008, p. 139). Theoretical saturation occurred at a point when my data started indicating reduplication and redundancy. At that point, no new insights were obtained, no new themes were identified, and no issues arose with regard to the category of data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Last but not least, I provided a description of the meanings and essences of the experience, representing the group as a whole. In short, this process was repeated for each participant until the point of saturation was reached.

Concluding Comments

This chapter outlines the methodological approach that was adopted in this study, including the sampling strategy and methods used to gather and analyze the data. I utilized a modification of van Kaam’s (1966) method of analyzing phenomenological
data. I reviewed raw data by listing and grouping every expression relevant to the experience, testing each expression to check whether it contained a horizon of the experience, identifying invariant constituents, and finally identifying themes through coding using MAXQDA software. This chapter has also outlined strategies that I used to ensure rigor and credibility of this study.
Chapter 5: Presentation, Analysis, and Synthesis of the Data

This chapter focuses on the presentation, analysis, and synthesis of the data. To reiterate what was stated in Chapter 1, the following overarching research questions guided this study:

1. How do LCTL instructors and learners describe the phenomena of learner autonomy?
2. What strategies do LCTL instructors and students use to promote learner autonomy?

In this chapter I portray themes that are relevant to the above research questions and also reflected in the data I obtained from the interview transcriptions. I analyzed each interview as a single case first, then obtained common themes across the data with the aim of addressing the research questions. In order to achieve the goal of understanding of data, I searched for themes, relationships, patterns, and dimensions in the data I gathered. At this point, data analysis entailed making sense out of text and memo and present the interpretation of the meaning of data (Creswell, 2013; Tesch, 2013; Rapley & Silverman, 2011). The following are the steps I followed for data analysis:

Horizontalization of Participants’ Data: Listing and Preliminary Grouping

Using van Kaam’s modified method of analysis (Moustakas, 1994), a listing of horizons (expressions that depicts a moment of the experience) of experience was the first step. This step involved an in-depth and thorough review of the verbatim interview transcripts of participants. To ensure credibility and data validation process, I did member checking with research participants in this step. I read each transcript through once and
then read it again to gain insights related to learner autonomy. While reading each participant’s transcript, I utilized *epoche* by subsequently reflecting. I spent a few minutes reflecting and keeping a journal while still the visualization of the interview was still fresh in my mind. This step enabled me to familiarize myself with each participant’s transcript and accurately organize data by compiling a list of expressions that contained a moment of experience that was possible to label or state in exact terms as a description of learner autonomy (invariant constituents).

**Invariant Constituents: Reduction and Elimination**

The second step involved testing whether each invariant constituent (a moment of experience that can be stated in exact terms) contained a moment of the experience enough to understand it (Moustakas, 1994). I organized and clustered emerging thematic groupings from each transcript. Each statement was considered in order to determine whether it contained a moment of the experience of learner autonomy. Then, all moments of experiences containing exhibiting evidence of the experience were labeled and classified under themes (Moustakas, 1994). As recommended in Moustakas (1994), I eliminated all the overlapping, repetitive, and vague language in order to only have expressions that represented invariant constituents remaining. The next step was a final identification of invariant constituents and themes. Please refer to Appendix H for resultant themes and invariant constituents.

**Individual Textual Description of Learner Autonomy Synopses**

The first in-depth interview and subsequent interviews and member checking sought to evoke the description of learner autonomy and experiences of LCTL instructors.
and students. In each of the participants’ synopses below, I present an individual textual description including verbatim examples from transcribed interviews (Moustakas, 1994). A brief description of demographic information is also provided in the beginning. This study uses Swahili pseudonyms to de-identify research participants while still remaining on course with emerging descriptions of learner autonomy and personal experiences that represent their experiences of teaching and learning LCTLS in a mid-sized midwestern university in the U.S.

This section presents each case in order to highlight personal descriptions and experiences of teaching and learning Swahili as a LCTL. I then conduct a cross case theme analysis to display common emerging themes pertinent to the two research questions that guide this study. The extent of research findings exhibits not only the context of examining participants’ unique understanding of learner autonomy but also a basis for composite description (Moustakas, 1994). That is, utilizing participants’ descriptions to formulate a detailed description of the phenomenon.

**Participants’ Description of Learner Autonomy**

**Jasiri’s description of learner autonomy.**

Jasiri is a 31-year-old male from an East African country. He is pursuing his Ph.D in the College of Education in a mid-sized midwestern university in the U.S. Jasiri has a Bachelor’s degree from one of the universities in East Africa and holds a Master’s degree from the College of Arts and Science at the same university where he is pursuing his PhD. He has spent six years teaching Swahili as a foreign language, both in the U.S. and abroad. He admitted that teaching Swahili as a first language at home is quite different
from teaching it as a LCTL in the U.S. and cited a lack of resources and speech communities as a major impediment to successful teaching of Swahili in the U.S. He believes that it is through immersion that students can become autonomous in learning to use the Swahili language.

Jasiri stated that learner autonomy is connected with the use of learning resources. As a result, he described learner autonomy in relation to a learner’s abilities to determine and utilize resources to achieve his/her learning needs. Jasiri explained the following:

I think learner autonomy is an aspect of learning where the learner has the capability to decide what they want to learn and they know how they can do that and they can get all the information they need by themselves. That means that they can have access to different resources be it technology or human resources to take care of their studies and you know they can plan on what they want to study.

According to Jasiri, students learn differently from the way teachers want them to learn. To emphasize this point, Jasiri specifically stated, “I think that students don't always learn the way we want them to learn, they have their own ways of learning, and teachers need to know that, I think that's not an option”.

From time to time during our interview, Jasiri was emphatic as to how instructors should focus on the interests of students in promoting their learning autonomy. Consequently, he explained that allowing students to work on their own to pursue their personal learning interests is a good way of promoting autonomy and “helps student’s individual discoveries and customizing learner, learning preferences”. In the light of
personal discoveries, learners are able to learn how to be independent and to determine what seems important for their learning needs.

Another key point Jasiri discussed was in relation to training oneself to explore unfamiliar tools and learning fields. To demonstrate that learning autonomy is achieved through self-exploration, Jasiri gave an example from his past learning experience with electronics:

I trained myself, I bought some computer books and started [to discover] what computers is all about. I just liked to play with electronics... But I liked to even open mobile phones and trying to see what is made of the hardware part. So, I didn’t do any course in electronics but I had that love for computers and other electronic devices as well.

To put it differently, Jasiri has applied a self-exploration strategy to influence his students’ learning autonomy and his own teaching and learning autonomy. He believes that when students are given an opportunity to manipulate various tools, they make significant progress in shaping their autonomy in different learning contexts.

Another aspect of learner autonomy that Jasiri described is creativity. As an instructor, he creates his own learning materials for students. In essence, Jasiri clarified that this gives him freedom to choose suitable learning activities that enhance his learners’ autonomy. To emphasize this point, Jasiri explained:

As a teacher, I have tried to create some materials maybe not to share them online but, at least, sharing them with my students. I mentioned initially that I do sing, I have recorded some short songs which can be used for language learning, I have
created some videos which can be used for language learning, I am also working on the iBook project where students can learn and find the resources they want from it [iBook].

Motivation was the most compelling component of learner autonomy that Jasiri mentioned. According to him, students can only succeed if they strive to achieve their learning objectives. He explained, “Honestly this is a very challenging aspect of learning especially in learning when we talk of technology. Yeah, technology is something that sometimes people need to have some kind of motivation”. Jasiri reiterated that motivation is often overlooked when guiding learners to become autonomous learners.

While acknowledging the vital role that motivation plays in promoting learner autonomy, Jasiri brought into focus how personal mentors and role models also shape students’ autonomy. For instance, he credited his learning success to a professor who inspired him to pursue computer-related courses. He recalled, “For the first time I was so much inspired I would say that Dr. [X] in those courses inspired me, he planted this seed in me, it was something that I could honestly do. So I worked hard and took those courses.” Based on his own experience, Jasiri saw that often, students imitate their mentors to the point of wanting to become independent and take control of their learning. Henceforth, Jasiri has used his professor’s inspiration to motivate and influence his own students’ autonomy.

**Zakia’s description of learner autonomy.**

Zakia is a 33-year-old Ph.D. student from an East African country who has been teaching LCTLs in several American universities since 2009. He majored in Swahili in
college and has lived in a Swahili-immersed culture since childhood. Zakia, just like Jasiri, perceives teaching Swahili in the U.S. as different from teaching the language in the same country he comes from.

Zakia relates learner autonomy to students’ motivation. He explained that students who are autonomous are generally highly motivated. Speaking of his own students, he said, “You could tell that they were very motivated. They wanted to know almost every piece and bit of it [Swahili], so their level of motivation was so high.” He went on to clarify that motivation, and hence, attainment of learning autonomy, is based on one’s intentions for learning a language. For example, he explained the following:

[At our university] some of our students you might have realized happen to be in Swahili classes because it was a requirement, they just wanted to fulfill foreign language requirement. […] I have also taught Swahili to high school students, some of them are very highly motivated because they know they can transfer those credits to college ...I think it depends on one’s intentions about learning of the language.

Zakia insisted that learner autonomy is promoted and shaped by a person’s motivation. Equally importantly, Zakia signified personal interests as a critical element that helps mold learners’ autonomy and gave several examples of how his students’ personal interests motivated them to become autonomous learners of Swahili. According to him, these examples describe learner autonomy:

I taught two Swahili students who are in the military so they knew they needed the language because they might be deployed in East Africa where it is spoken ...
she [the female student] was so much into health, you could just tell she was talking about [a politician] hospitals, the beyond zero campaign in an East African country, and I think a vaccine for Ebola. Ebola was discovered or invented in West Africa, so that was great news for her. But on the other side, the gentleman was concentrated mostly on the issues to do with politics especially in [a country in East Africa] since he's from [a country in East Africa] and that's the time you know their president was forcing his way into a third term.

Zakia noted that his students had one purpose in mind, based on their professional goals—becoming autonomous with using the Swahili language before they were deployed to East Africa. As a result of this observation, Zakia concluded that there is a positive correlation between personal interests and motivation in promoting autonomy.

In the light of personal interests, students also applied creativity in executing tasks that promoted their learning autonomy. For instance, Zakia explained that his students initiated creative projects such as cooking, politics, and music related to East African lifestyles. Some projects were implemented collaboratively, while others were a result of individual effort. He pointed out, “You can try to incorporate all their interests instead of teaching what you think is relevant to them; it’s not about you, it’s about them,” demonstrating that learner autonomy envelops various interrelated components: interests, motivation, and creativity.

Similar to Jasiri, Zakia believes that personal mentorship also plays a vital role in fostering learner autonomy, based on his own experiences. Zakia acknowledged that he has modeled himself after his mentors and was inspired to work hard to become
successful just like them. He explained that paradoxically, he has become independent by
seeking the counsel of his mentors on many occasions:

Oh my gosh! I think I can say he has influenced my career ever since I stepped
my legs here… and then he was my academic advisor so he was following up
everything that I was doing and he was advising me what courses to take… I
remember [one day] he called me and he reminded me the deadline for [a
conference] abstract is today. So, I am just calling to ask you whether you are
interested.

Zakia confessed that such instances are the ones which molded him to become both
autonomous in teaching and learning. He observed that students become your replica
because they model how you execute various learning tasks. He described:

I remember when I was working for the University of Oregon, the professor in
charge there told us that the way you treat your students would be the products of
how you treat them. If you want them to be passive students, they are going to be
passive. If you want them to be active students, they are going to be active. So, its
up to you to decide what kind students you want. If you don't want them to be
autonomous you can spoon-feed them, you tell them everything and do everything
for them, and they are just going to sit there, note most of the time they are just
going to be dozing off sleeping.

As can be seen, Zakia’s description of learner autonomy is centered mostly on
personal mentorship, but it also bridges other aspects discussed above, such as
motivation, personal interests, and creativity.
**Haki’s description of learner autonomy.**

Haki is an instructor of linguistics and Swahili in a mid-sized midwestern university in the U.S. Haki comes from an East African country but has been in the U.S. for 10 years, initially as a student and then as an assistant professor. He describes learner autonomy as follows:

…things that the language learner can be empowered to do on their own when they are learning the language. So that they not only have to rely on the teacher to tell them what to do. In most cases we focus on the autonomy of the learner in terms of using the textbook, we are giving this person a textbook to go and read on their own and learn some elements of grammar or giving this person some exercises to try them on their own…

Other than working independently, Haki also linked learner autonomy to motivation. During our interview, he appeared to use motivation and personal interest interchangeably to describe learner autonomy. For example, Haki explained:

…the most important thing about learning a language is the motivation, personal interest, that’s it! If you have the positive attitude towards a language you can do anything and then you have the environment that is going to help you learn that language.

Haki was emphatic that students’ motivation is significant in regards to their success as language learners. From his point of view, motivated learners strive to become more autonomous than those learners who are not motivated.
Like other participants, Haki saw personal mentorship and modeling as important aspects of learner autonomy. He acknowledged that his success in teaching languages depended in part on his previous mentors, who influenced his learning style and teaching methods. For instance, he described a case when he was about to drop Swahili as an academic subject:

I was thinking maybe I have to drop Swahili because I liked all my subjects, I had to drop one, so which one? But after consulting with especially [a professor in one of the East African countries], [he advised me to] drop anything else but not Swahili. That was helpful, that actually ended up to be the best advice I have ever received. Because I continued doing Swahili and after high school when there was no job I was able to get some little kibarua [job] here and there because of Swahili and eventually Swahili.

This advice also revealed that personal interests cannot be overlooked when it comes to fostering learner autonomy. Haki’s personal interest was to acquire training that was going to open his future job opportunities. In the same way, learners are also motivated by personal interests associated with Swahili language and so work hard to become autonomous in the use of the language.

Finally, Haki likewise described learner autonomy as having an element of creativity. He explained that over the years he has created and developed a number of Swahili teaching and learning materials all aimed at helping learners to acquire language skills and enhance their autonomy. Forthwith, he maintained that creativity in language
learning aids in creating authentic language learning contexts that sustain and promote learning autonomy.

**Hazina’s description of learner autonomy.**

Hazina studied English and Literature in one of the East African universities. Before coming to the U.S., Hazina taught for many years, and later she pursued a master’s degree in Applied Linguistics and a Ph.D. in Higher Education at a mid-sized midwestern university. She is currently teaching at another university in a different state in the U.S.

The first thing Hazina had in mind when talking about autonomy was independence, but she further clarified what she meant, describing learner autonomy as:

… an aspect of learning where the learner has the capability to decide what they want to learn and they know how they can do that and they can get all the information they need by themselves. That means that they can have access to different resources be it technology or human resources to take care of their studies and you know they can plan on what they want to study…I think that students don't always learn the way we want them to learn, they have their own ways of learning, and teachers need to know that I think that's not an option.

Based on this description, Hazina implied that being an autonomous learner means making choices in regard to learning.

Hazina believes in allowing her students to be independent. She explained that she prefers guiding and collaborating more than controlling them in their activities and opts for a constructivist approach where everyone is a creator of knowledge. She believes
that both the teacher and the student should create knowledge, rather than a unidirectional classroom. For her, promoting autonomy means:

There's a level at which you allow students to work independently because really, you're not the only source of knowledge. That student have an opportunity to create knowledge for themselves other than having to hear it from just one source. I would say learner autonomy has everything to do with allowing students to explore on their own, to learn on their own, to discover things on their own.

Rather than controlling students, Hazina advocates for empowering them to be autonomous by encouraging them to take charge of the various classroom activities. At the same time, she opined that instructors need to free themselves and allow students to build their confidence in task execution. She said, “Well, maybe I need to … let students do some of this work on their own because I can’t teach everything in class.” Hazina explained that empowering students means letting their interests be the main focus. As a result, the instructor should just guide students and support the achievement of their personal interests achieved through learning the Swahili language.

Another key point featured in our interview was motivation. Hazina expressed concern that most students are not autonomous because their instructors do not motivate or encourage them to aggressively pursue their learning goals. Using her previous experience, Hazina gave examples of what she did in the past to motivate students. According to her, success in learning Swahili depends on the teacher’s motivation as well as how the teacher motivates students using varied stimuli.
I [Hazina] create something whether it’s a conversation or a skit or whatever and then come back and present in class. In that way, they work on their own. In many cases when you give them that feeling that they’re in charge, they do a good job.

In relation to motivation, Hazina acknowledged the role of personal mentors and role models in promoting learning autonomy. Personally, she had benefited from her long-time mentors who encouraged and supported her in realizing her educational dreams. She described a case where she used a former student as a role model for her Swahili beginner class. She described:

She’s [her former Swahili student] an administrator but she has a very good understanding of Swahili. She helped me from time to time to either teaching a particular topic or just coming to talk to the students about Swahili and Swahili culture. Because she herself did her research in [a country in East Africa] and she stayed at the [that country’s] Coast for a long period of time. She has a good grasp of the culture [and so] a she was a good resource for me.

She acknowledges the role of peer influence in motivation, mentoring, and collaboration. She mentioned that she has previously invited some graduate students who had learned the language to visit her classes. She believes that their influence brings a positive impact to her students.

… Some master’s students that I taught a while back. They got a very good grasp of Swahili. I remember also inviting one of them to my classroom to just come and talk to the students about how to learn Swahili. Because he himself had that experience and he seemed to have enjoyed his experience and he had done well. I
invited him to just show the students on language-learning skills and what methods they could use to help improve their learning of Swahili.

Apart from this particular role model, she also invited other Swahili speakers from East Africa who either teach or study at her university. Hazina used these speakers to practice with her Swahili beginner class students. Hazina insisted that exposing her students to native speakers of Swahili through one-on-one interaction is a modest way of fostering their learning autonomy in learning the language.

**Latifah’s description of learner autonomy.**

Latifah hails from an East African country and has stayed in the U.S. the shortest time among all the instructor participants. Prior to her arrival in the U.S., she taught Swahili at the high school level, although her training is in English and literature. In the interview, Latifah describes learner autonomy as:

… giving learners an opportunity to express themselves maybe during instruction because autonomy here would mean that Learner's are given more chances to speak what they think and to express themselves and it is opposite to the kind of teaching we have where a teacher would basically give a lecture, [comparison] Learner autonomy is the opposite of an instructor just lecturing to the students while they do the listening.

According to Latifah, students should be left alone to do most activities by themselves. She believes that the learner autonomy phenomenon is promoted by allowing students to explore their potential through participating in various activities of their choice.
In order to promote autonomy, Latifah explains that instructors should consider themselves as facilitators. She has emphasized the need for aligning their facilitation role to students’ interests. Latifah has expressed satisfaction with playing the role of a facilitator. She explained:

For instance, there was a student who did a presentation on the climate of East Africa and he talked generally about life in Malawi and it was quite interesting because the student mentioned the types of food people in Malawi eat, their culture and their weather patterns and it was quite interesting because I actually didn't understand Malawi that much but I think I learned from the student.

In this example, Latifah explained that it was easier to guide the student on what vocabulary to use to describe the types of food and climate than just describing the vocabulary, as he was motivated to acquire more knowledge in the target language, hence contributing to his autonomy.

As far as students’ interests are concerned, Latifah insisted on giving them freedom of choice—not only the opportunity to choose their favorite project, but also on their prospective future areas of interest. For instance, as mentioned above, Latifah often asks her students what type of topics they want to research or read about, choosing to empower them rather than restrict them to a narrow focus. She described how she asked students to choose their topics:

Which topic do you think you would like most that you can talk about with your fellow students in class? … so the students [would] give their suggestions and we listed them down and then each student was asked to pick the best suggestion, the
best topic they would like to present on and that is how the students prepared their presentation.

Although she admitted that motivating students is a challenging task, Latifah believes that motivation is one of the ways learner autonomy is promoted. She tries to encourage students to speak in Swahili without the fear of making supposedly glaring mistakes. She explained:

If I had a way of encouraging [my] students to be more willing to practice using Swahili it would be so good because sometimes I do teach my students but they know the rules they can understand but they don’t speak out so if I had a way of encouraging students to be more active in class to participate maybe I would be, I would feel better.

Latifah believes that freedom from fear is a good strategy for promoting one’s language learning autonomy.

Almasi’s description of learner autonomy.

Almasi identifies herself as an African American with an immense background and connection with the African continent and its people. In part, this is because of her husband, who comes from an East African country. She has met many people on her research missions in Africa.

According to Almasi, learner autonomy is about being able to choose or favor a specific method of acquiring knowledge:

I think that as a teacher you might have a number of requirements and tools available to students they should use to demonstrate knowledge of a process that
they have learned and mastered something. However, like for instance, they might not need to use all of those tools or they might gravitate towards some or none at all or they might have a specific way in which they learn better or more comfortable learning, and I think that is one aspect of learner autonomy. Simply put, learner autonomy is choosing what one feels comfortable to use in order to learn.

Another aspect of autonomy that she explained was trust. Almasi explained that a teacher should trust students’ abilities when it comes to language task execution. She said:

I think learner autonomy is also about trusting peoples’ abilities to learn and trusting that you know … that they have the ability to learn and apply what you have given them what they know, what you are supposed to show them that they can apply it and learn in a way that produces desired outcomes without having to follow particular structure all the time.

From an individual perspective, Almasi explained that autonomy was about taking charge and trusting one’s self to achieve a certain goal:

And then also thinking that a learner wanting to learn something and taking it on their own. For instance, I think that in the case of language or research taking it upon their own just means that you have gone beyond the classroom and wanting to go some place and wanting to study some place where a language is spoken for instance, because you know that you will be in a situation where the language is crucial to your learning or the learning is going to have to come about in order for
Almasi clarified that she believes that language abilities should be linked to passion and personal interests, and confessed that her passion is traveling and conducting research in Africa and that people of color are the impetus behind her interest in the Swahili language. She described her own experience, which helped motivate her to become more autonomous in her study of Swahili:

…this idea of nature, you know in East Africa going on safaris. Those things become an interest, out of ignorance and if you appreciate those things and you want to see those things you know it is in [an East African country]. But then I have always wanted to go there, just learning my history like I said before I just added to like I had more knowledge to a lot of things but having the knowledge and reading it in a book and understanding certain things and experience was a part of it. What really introduced me to certain aspects of [East African] culture more is the music, and the foods and the different ethnic groups I was living with in [East African country] and meeting then starting a business with some [people from an East African country] people.

In addition to time spent in East Africa, Almasi’s interest in learning Swahili was accelerated by the fact that she would spend significant amounts of time with Swahili speakers even though she did not understand what they talked about. This was the experience that compelled her to enroll for formal Swahili classes in the U.S., “I started...
to take Kiswahili in school formally and started to learn more about the language and its spread and transfer and the dynamics of Kiswahili in the continent [Africa].”

While noting that developing interest is usually important for language, she realized that the same interest may be lost when someone lacks focus and creative ways of maintaining it. Almasi acknowledges that it was initially a challenge but her determination was a major factor for her: “There has to be some investment like you have to be really interested and invested in it [Swahili] or moved by motivation.”

Like most participants in this study, Almasi believes that language learning autonomy is earned. Language learners need to invest extra time or effort to explore all possible and promising strategies to promote that autonomy. For instance, Almasi’s passion for cultural artifacts such as music, food, and social gatherings are just a few aspects that helped her in becoming an autonomous Swahili speaker. She explained:

And so, you know, listening to like Genge [a genre of music in East African] music and all other stuff it just become natural for me that having never set my foot there I knew certain things that really fascinated me and attracted me […] it was a big deal if you were a [from a country in East Africa] you could dance, you could sing.

Together with curiosity and determination, her extra effort helped her become successful in attaining language learning autonomy.

Almasi credits her success to her professor mentors who taught her Swahili in both formal and informal settings. She insisted that initial experience plays a critical role in embracing a new language:
I credit 150% my formal experience and my initial formal experience with a specific professor and the way he taught. I think it helped me feel very confident and positive about speaking, and learning and reading and writing in Kiswahili… Almasi acknowledged the influence of the many mentors she met, people who helped to refine her language skills. According to her, it is difficult to separate learner autonomy from the role that mentors play in promoting it. These mentors may be professors, or they may be friends and family. She was surprised when one day her sister-in-law posed a question, “Do you know that you are speaking Kiswahili now a lot more like somebody that is from here?” This encouraged and motivated her to further autonomy. Conversely, her frustration with asking people for vocabulary words also motivated her to become more autonomous:

So I am tired of only knowing certain words like ‘MAMBO’ vipi? [greetings-equivalent of what’s up] like you know every little bit basic that everybody knows. Like ‘nakupenda’ [I love you] that the only thing you know. After being totally fed up with not understanding what my friends were talking about sometimes when they get together it was just like I am going to learn. Yeah, and then enrolled and that was it.

Almasi believes that learner autonomy is defined and shaped by people in one’s immediate circle who are willing to invest and dedicate their time to helping a motivated language learner immerse themselves in the target culture and language.
Najma’s description of learner autonomy.

Najma identifies herself as Caucasian American and has traveled to East Africa several times during her undergraduate studies. Initially, she enrolled in Swahili because she just wanted to fulfill her foreign language requirement. In our interview, she confessed that studying Swahili was something she never thought would continue after completing her foreign language requirement. However, she eventually grew to love the Swahili language and culture.

Based on her travels and studies of Swahili, Najma described learner autonomy as:

Being able to learn on your own and not necessarily be like, this is exactly how you have to do this or this is the only way…It's being able to figure out what learning style works best for you and then utilize that to do your best in the class. Notably, the element of choice is evident in Najma’s description of learner autonomy, much like those of other participants.

Initially, Najma thought her experience in [an East African country] was going to be a nightmare but as time passed by, she realized the need to adjust to the environment despite her limited language skills. Even though she was not sufficiently equipped with Swahili language skills, her personal interest in East African culture and the continent kept her motivated. On the whole, her fears of living in a foreign country never overcame her, despite coming from a small rural town in the U.S. She explained:

At that time, I knew nothing about African culture because am from a small rural town, and I kind of got stuck in the kind of culture that you were used to knowing.
Exposed to new kind of things, I was like it is great to learn something new so that’s why I took Swahili in the first place.

Najma, like the other participants, also felt that mentors helped her become more autonomous. In acknowledging the presence of Swahili native speakers at her university, Najma recognized the important role of mentoring they played in fostering her autonomy in the language as they helped her when she encountered problems speaking Swahili:

There's also just a lot of native speakers on campus so I would run into them a lot and speak to them as well. I found it to not be too difficult at all because there was a lot of opportunity here… It's so much easier to learn when you're actually in the environment because you don't really have a choice. I liked that though. I like that it really pushed me to further my skills and actually be able to communicate with people.

It is important to remember that, like Najma, many people have mentors who support them, whether through helping learners directly to solve language issues or by simply motivating them.

**Adimu’s description of learner autonomy.**

Adimu comes from a country in West Africa. He was a student in African Studies in a mid-sized Midwestern university in the U.S. According to him:

If you are a learner, you're a student, you are studying something, autonomy is like independence or like being on your own. I would describe learner autonomy to mean that your own agency, your own resource or setting up, relying on your own self to make it or to get the best of what you are learning.
Adimu had a valid reason for studying Swahili—job opportunities associated with the language:

I come from...West Africa and Swahili is widely spoken in the continent mainly in the eastern parts, somewhere other parts of the continent, I thought it was a very good opportunity that I should seize, so that's why, and also my friends where speaking it, everywhere you go Swahili. It was opportunity I had to take care of. I have a background on radio, so I saw job opening at the UN radio and I looked at it and I qualified but then they said they wanted someone who spoke Swahili, I said I am studying Swahili man. So obviously your marketability improves and then you also get to speak another language and it makes you a better person.

Much like Zakia’s students who needed Swahili for their military deployment, Adimu’s autonomy developed due to promising prospects; his current major, journalism, was the main reason he wanted to diversify his target audience and language.

It is important to note that, like other participants, Adimu acknowledges the role of friends and other mentors who have helped to shape his language learning autonomy. He explained, “I had built a support system in my educational structure so why not take advantage of it.” Adimu maintained that Swahili speakers on campus inspire him to continue practicing using the language.

**Fatuma’s description of learner autonomy.**

Fatuma grew up in the Midwest and identifies as Caucasian American. She started studying Swahili when she was an undergraduate in order to prepare for a study abroad
program in one of the East African countries. She has returned to this particular country several times because of a long-term research project.

Fatuma has a broad perspective of learner autonomy:

I think of autonomy as independence. I think it's self-determination, freedom. If I think about learner autonomy, it should be a classroom or a learning experience that is very student-centered, and where the student determines the pace and the path and the tools that they want to use to learn the language or learn whatever they're trying to learn. It should be in their own style.

Fatuma points towards a self-reliant perspective where the course of learning is determined by freedom of choice. Her description of learner autonomy is also guided by a consideration of the type of learner. She believes that people learn differently, which means their levels of autonomy may vary significantly. For Fatuma, autonomy is:

about multiple intelligence theory, and how there are some people who are very visual learners. I'm a very visual learner. I need to see things written down before I can remember them. There are people who are auditory learners; there are people who are kinesthetic learners; there are people who are social and emotional learners. I think about learner autonomy has to take all of those things into consideration. Who is this learner? What's the best way for them to grasp the information and to process it so that they remember and they can use it in whatever way that they need it? Is that how you're defining it?

According to Fatuma, no one aspect can describe what learner autonomy is, but it is a combination of various attributes that combine to form a trait that is beneficial to
successful attainment of set language learning goals. In addition to this, autonomy entails formation of relationships that support the effort of language learners.

Closely related to the formation of relationships are personal mentorship and role modeling. Fatuma’s travel experiences created a trail of relationships with people who helped her become an autonomous language speaker. She was convinced that when talking about learner autonomy, personal mentors should be part of the discourse. It is important to realize that her involvement with various people both in abroad and the U.S. has characterized her Swahili competency. For instance, she describes how her host family became mentors:

… and they became [my] mentors and [my] peer mentors or our buddies. He really encouraged us to interact as much as possible with native [speakers of one of the East African countries] so that we could learn the language and get to know the culture directly from people.

Also, seeing other non-native speakers use Swahili was a great motivation for Fatuma.

First, the Pope:

I saw Pope John Paul II in Nairobi when he visited. He conducted part of that mass speaking in Swahili. I was so impressed by that, because I'm like, he must be so fluent in so many different languages, and for him to take the time to learn how to say some things in Swahili showed some commitment to that place.

Second, her former professor:

My professor, [his name], was really inspiring to me, because he was like that. He could joke around with people. He was so fluent in Swahili. I just loved watching
him interacting with his students, or his colleagues, and he would make these jokes, and everybody would laugh. They were just like, "He's one of us."... I was like, "I want to be like that," and it was helpful to have a role model, and to see that it was possible. I think he really inspired me.

Third, another lady former professor:

She's amazing. She's super fluent, and she's a linguist, she's a linguistic anthropologist. She's another person I'm like, "I want to be [the name of that professor] when I grow up." She is very fluent, and she's not a native speaker [of Swahili].

Fatuma perceives herself as a social person. She regularly assesses her progress by the encouragement and support she receives during linguistic interactions:

“Oh, you're really fluent," or, "Your accent is really nice." A lot of people would comment on my accent, and I would feel really proud of that, and really happy that people gave me that feedback.

Regardless of whether or not she knew the person as an individual or whether they were peers or instructors, personal mentors and models represent an important aspect of Fatuma’s learner autonomy.

Fatuma also describes learner autonomy in terms of personal interests, as her research interests in east Africa motivated her to develop her autonomy in Swahili. She primarily worked with women and children, whom she depended on with regard to refining her Swahili skills. Eventually, her advanced Swahili skills enabled her to be an independent researcher without an interpreter in the field. With this in mind, Fatuma
emphasized that her research interests had required her to lessen the distance of being a foreigner and make herself more accessible without a third party. She maintained that “learner autonomy is really about […] being able to use the language in real life on your own terms. That's how students will be able to gain some fluency in the language.”

To summarize, participants’ perspectives indicate that learner autonomy can be described using many aspects. These descriptions revealed motivation, personal mentorship, role modeling, personal interest, creativity, and independence as components of learner autonomy. Additionally, participants’ experiences indicated other significant activities and strategies they undertake to maintain their autonomy. In the following section, I will describe the major strategies that participants of this study identified as part of their concept of learner autonomy.

Participants’ Strategies for Promoting Learner Autonomy

In this section I will focus on strategies identified by research participants, learning contexts/environments, and various tools reported to enhance learner autonomy.

**Jasiri’s strategies for promoting autonomy.**

Jasiri is an avid technology enthusiast. During the interview, he discussed using a variety of online tools to help his students become autonomous. He depends on virtual environments; one of the methods he uses is to build online communities where Swahili students and native/competent Swahili speakers can practice the language. He explained that speech communities collaborate on various learning tasks aimed at fostering learning autonomy:
So, I think students need to have some kind of connection that they create a speech community that has members from the classroom. So, I emphasize on collaboration but also I put a lot of emphasis on the use of technology to connect with resources that are available online, but also to connect with other members of the speech community elsewhere because technology can facilitate that, can connect people who speak their language from different places.

As Jasiri has gained more experience as a language teacher, he has refined his strategies for promotion of learner autonomy, both in terms of methodology and of technology. He explained:

I feel like as a language teacher I have been evolving in this field in this sense, I knew very little about technology when I came for the first time to teach the language, probably because I was coming from a country that has a lot of limitations on the use of technology. But when I came here, I saw a lot of opportunities in incorporating technology in classrooms. There are things that I have been using very recently to support learners' autonomy… I like to teach using what we call communicative approach in classrooms... where language-learning focuses on context and you bring these real-life situations for the learning of language [...] So, focusing on communicative language-learning which also is called proficiency based language-learning I insist my students to use technology in learning grammar because I don't talk much about grammar in my classroom, so I ask my students to go and find a lot of information, grammatical information on the Internet in most cases. Another thing that I do mostly is, I create a lot of
activities using technology, I have been using Hot Potatoes, I have been using iBook authoring tool, I have been using a lot of other online tools to create a lot of resources, I mean a lot of exercises that students can use to learn the language autonomously. Like to cover a lot of things that I don't even cover in classrooms.

Hot Potatoes and iBook authoring applications are tools used by content designers, language teachers, and learners to create interactive language learning content. They provide a variety of activities targeting specific language skills such as writing, speaking, and listening (https://hotpot.uvic.ca/; http://www.apple.com/ibooks-author/).

Jasiri uses computer labs to foster learner autonomy, and his students respond positively because they like computers. Although it is relatively tricky, Jasiri gives his students freedom to use various devices or strategies to achieve a set of objectives. He allows students to have personal learning environments, which include the use of smartphones in his classroom.

Jasiri believes in freeing students to make choice on many activities they want to achieve on their own and that his class should be a democratic one; he often allows students to air their opinions and feedback in order to improve instruction. He opined that autocratic classrooms never succeed, and therefore instructors should treat students as co-teachers because of the symbiotic kind of relationship that exist between them. He empowers his students to run classroom activities in order to take charge of their learning.

Jasiri chooses resources for language learning based on his students’ interests. For instance, he uses Quizlet, an online application that has provision for playing with
flashcards in order to memorize vocabulary, because his students like playing with it. He further explained that his students play many games using this tool, and their feedback has motivated him to keep using it.

Apart from the use of technology, Jasiri explained that interaction with native or competent Swahili speakers played a critical role in promoting students’ language learning autonomy:

Language learning is very difficult if you don’t have someone to practice the language with. Knowing a word in a language is totally different from using that language in a normal conversation or communication. So, the computer can tell me how to say hi in another language but I will need someone to practice that with. If I don’t have someone to practice that language with then its likely that I’m just going to have that word in my mind but I might not be able to use it.

**Zakia’s strategies for promoting autonomy.**

Zakia applies standards he has learned in teacher training to promote learner autonomy among his students. He explained:

If you are going through this training before teaching Swahili as a foreign language here, it is based on five standards of teaching you know foreign languages to American students; it starts with communication, they call them 5C’s; they have to teach them how to communicate within the context, that's why I am saying everything is presented within the context. And then there is the second C is about the cultures, so culture is so important and actually the teaching of grammar is not as important as the teaching of culture. The third C is about
comparison, so they know their language, and then they know the cultural stuff that accompany their language, and you will also, be presenting them with the new culture of the new language so they can do some comparison linguistically and culturally. For instance, how do you greet someone in the U.S.? You can just wave but in Africa, East Africa especially where Swahili is spoken that might be considered to be very rude, right? Who says what to whom, when and how? So, all those things have to be within the context.

Knowing how to navigate these principles can be a challenge, but he believes it is a strategy that can be achieved with constant practice and experience.

Zakia is a relatively experienced Swahili instructor, having taught in various Swahili programs and universities in the U.S. He describes both his current and previous teaching experiences as “awesome”. When teaching language learners, he models their classroom experiences on real life situations. For example, he utilizes interactive maps to teach about Africa and where the Swahili language is spoken. Other examples include task-related learning such as cooking, singing, and storytelling. According to Zakia, these experiences stimulate students’ interests and impetus for becoming autonomous in performing a variety of language tasks. He narrates one of those experiences with his students:

For the first time I found myself making Pillau for them...because she insisted, "I want to learn!" And you could see you know...each time we cooked something because we cooked at her place on three different occasions, she would write to her parents "we are cooking this am gonna...eh I have the recipe with me so, when
I come to Rhode Island after the sessions, am gonna make this for you!” You could just see that level of motivation. Then the final point...I don't know why, I think am going to focus mostly on her because I have never seen such kind of motivation. Then her aunt happened to go to Kenya during the time that we are learning Swahili and now that added her motivation because you know her aunt didn't know anything about Swahili, she didn't know anything at all, so she took it upon herself to text her all the time...you can say this to the natives. it means this.
And this is the likely response…

In our interview, Zakia mentioned that the type of project given or the tools used to implement it could also arouse his students’ interest, particularly if technology is involved. He said:

… [a specific student] was always attached to his iPad, every time he had it, I tried to snatch it away, but I realized each time we wanted to do something to do with technology, he would be very much alert. And he would actually help the others...demonstrating to me, “actually you can also do this and we can and do this and arrive at the same you result, if we did it differently”. Oh! Wow! I realized this guy would only be motivated if there is some technology involved in it.

Zakia went on to explain that because of time constraints and other meeting logistics, his students met online to rehearse skits and discuss other assignments. They used Skype and Google Hangout to work around time and venue constraints. In addition,
he invites resource persons to interact with his students in both online and face-to-face contexts and provides his students with a variety of websites:

So, I give them some very relevant websites, like BBC Swahili, VOA Swahili, connect them with other Swahili speakers. For instance, on our last day, at a university in Virginia, we met the professor who was in charge of the Swahili department, although the only student from the University was going to continue with Swahili because of her military classes but nursing you know just wanted to make sure that they met so that in case of anything, if there was a Swahili function taking place on campus she can be invited you know that would keep her motivated to learn. And in case she had any questions she wanted an instant answer she can always reach out to that professor. And also the social media has saved a lot because for instance, for those four years that I have taught at [X University], we have a Facebook page. And people are posting Swahili things and a lot of fun things all the time.

According to Zakia, teaching Swahili in an East African country is different from teaching Swahili in the U.S., in part because the use of resources in each context is different. He explained that in U.S. there is a lack of culturally authentic resources that could facilitate the learning of Swahili, so he has to compensate with technology and other strategies:

You know the use of technology is very western, because back home we were not using technology in the classroom, our Swahili classrooms, so if for instance you bring something that is culturally authentic, that is something that is so East
African, that motivates them a lot. For instance, teach them a dance, teach them to cook a traditional meal, teach them and let them demonstrate how to welcome a visitor … the East African way. That is something to keep them wanting to come into your class the following day. Allow the class to experience real life situations; for example, how the market places are… Let that craziness be in your classroom, don't mind spending your money or if the program can provide for it might cost up to fifty dollars to buy various food items and then you have a real market in your classroom, yes and then after that you give them the food and all the fruits and all the vegetables…

These activities are significant because they give Swahili students authentic opportunities to practice Swahili in real or simulated environments. These authentic environments enhance learners’ confidence in using the target language because they receive immediate feedback from their communication partners, Zakia also believes that being creative facilitates the promotion of learner autonomy:

If you want them to be active you come up with fun activities. That's going to keep them involved and interested and awake, yeah, so you have to be very creative, like… I didn't know that teaching two students could be such a lot of work. You really prepare more because you want to have enough stuff for them to do activities; at the same time you know there is a limit.

**Haki’s strategies for promoting learner autonomy.**

Haki stated that authentic environments play a critical role in fostering learner autonomy, because when students are exposed to them, they are bound to make
significant progress with their language skills. Haki gave an example of when he was teaching about weather in a classroom with no windows, which made it difficult to explain how the weather looked without actually seeing it.

And then I want them to start expressing this [weather], so the best thing I did in the situation was... the classroom where we are not, there are no windows. And usually I would like them to do the real things “Hali ya hewa ikoje sasa?” (How is the weather like?) So they could just look outside and tell me, now here it wasn’t. How do you make it achieve the same purpose? ... Now is the time you can turn on your cellphone, go online and check in the weather. Log in to the weather forecast now let’s work on that. This is the time you use technology to achieve your own ends. Use in a nice way, otherwise unless you control it it can be misused in the classroom and you know instead of helping it becomes a hindrance.

In addition, Haki explained that interaction goes hand in hand with authentic experiences. He emphasized the need for instructors to create opportunities where language learners can meet with native speakers of the language and interact in a coffee forum or other settings.

We had time to even go for the coffee hour. If we asked the students to come at the coffee hour and interact it was good. And then we started the African Languages day, so there were all these new ways of people knowing that we had a Swahili program. We try to make the students interact amongst themselves you have to first of all give, you find that in the American culture.
Haki stated that he was not a great technology enthusiast like other instructors but acknowledged, as in the example about the weather given above, the role of technology in promoting learners’ autonomy. He explained:

But in terms of promoting learner autonomy, right now we are going more and more towards the use of technology, using resources online and as far as Swahili is concerned we have always used a lot although I have not developed lots of online materials. But the video from the University of Georgia KIKO (Kiswahili kwa kompyuta) has always been helpful and of course other online work that I give them to go and perform on their own. And also, the [online] dictionaries are some of the tools that they easily interact and find some of the materials online. So those are some of the strategies that we do use in Swahili and Swahili right now has lots of these materials from various institutions.

Haki believes that digital devices such as cellphones work hand in hand with online resources. Although he has on numerous occasions discouraged students from using those devices in class, he acknowledged that at times those devices are inevitable.

I know I told you guys never to turn to your computers or cellphones unless I allow you to do …now is the time you can turn on your cellphone, go online and check on the weather. Log in to the weather forecast now let’s work on that. This is the time you use technology to achieve your own ends. Use in a nice way, otherwise unless you control it can be misused in the classroom and you know instead of helping it becomes a hindrance
Among all my participants, Haki is the most experienced instructor, with more than 10 years’ experience teaching Swahili in the U.S. His interest in the language started at a young age. He explained:

So, you can see the issue of language I was interested in wasn’t just something that started in the university, something which has the roots back in primary school because had I not done well in English and Swahili then high school I wouldn’t have been allowed to do German, and consequently I wouldn’t have wanted to study German at a Kenyan university. Unfortunately, I wasn’t able to do German not because I didn’t have scores but because it didn’t work. So, eventually because of the system I had to look for courses that would suit me because it was highly competitive. I really didn’t have much choice, so I looked for what I could do and I went to literature and I also took Swahili and history, and here I was after the second year you have to drop one, to specialize if you doing BA. I continued doing Swahili and after high school when there was no job I was able to get some little ‘kibarua’ (temporary work).

Haki understands the linguistics of Swahili more than the other instructor participants. In our interview, he came across as someone who is widely read in his field. He explained:

… I did look at morphology of Bantu languages which was something I was very familiar with; and then I read Meyers Cotton work on code-switching. And Meyers Cotton is somebody who did a lot of work in East Africa. Code switching between Swahili and English, Swahili Kikuyu, Luyha, Maragoli. So she had a lot
of work, which she had done in East Africa here and there because of Swahili. Eventually, Swahili was the one that gave me the opportunity to come to the U.S., to be the Swahili teaching assistant at [a U.S. university]. If I had not done Swahili, I don’t think that chance to become the Swahili TA would have been available for me. And I can go on and on because I taught at [that U.S. university] as a teaching assistant and that experience was the most determining factor for me getting a position here at [this university].

Through his experience, Haki has managed to increase interest in learning Swahili at his current university, which has had led to increased enrolment to the point of needing to split classes to accommodate the surging student numbers.

So one of the things we did in Swahili is to really raise this interest until now we were able to split the class into two and now we have two sections of Swahili at elementary level. I think that was a huge improvement which was not there. We had time to even go for the coffee hour. If we asked the students to come at the coffee hour and interact it was good. And then we started the African Languages day, so there were all these new ways of people knowing that we had a Swahili program.

Last but not least, Haki believes that people learn and acquire skills differently. He clarified that different personality types favor different methods. According to him, these differences are crucial to understanding learners’ needs:
Hazina’s strategies for promoting learner autonomy.

Hazina explained that she exposes her students to native speakers of Swahili through one-on-one interaction as a modest way of making their learning more autonomous. She elaborated that such opportunities enable them to find role models and gain personal language mentors:

From time to time, I invited Swahili speakers to come and just practice speaking with the students. For example; I invited the … the assistant director for Global Studies. She’s an administrator but she has a very good understanding of Swahili. She helped me from time to time to either teaching a particular topic or just coming to talk to the students about Swahili and Swahili culture. Because she herself did her research in Kenya and she stayed at the Coast for a long period of time. She has a good grasp of the culture. She was a good resource for me. The other people that I invited to class were Swahili speakers from East Africa mainly Kenya. I would just have someone pop into class and converse with the students. She noted that the more language students interact with conversation partners, the more they build their confidence.

The other thing that I do is to encourage them to attend the Swahili conversation hour. This is voluntary for the students. It’s not like the classroom where they feel that they’re obligated to come. Just making that decision on their own that, “Yeah, I need to go and speak with other people … and converse and improve on my speaking skills.” That in itself is a way of encouraging students to take charge of their own learning.
Hazina also felt that if language students are exposed to daily life tasks using the target language, they end up improving their language skills. She explained:

Their task is to apply that knowledge to their everyday life. For example, what you do between Monday and Wednesday and then create a schedule and tell me the things that you do during those times and specify in terms of time, when do you go to class, when do you eat. …In that way, I am giving them the opportunity to use the language that they have done independently to create something that is relevant to them and to their own lives.

However, Hazina maintained that her main task in empowering students in relation to everyday life activities is to identify appropriate resources that facilitate the achievement of that goal. She said:

I identify the websites right at the beginning of the semester and I give them an assignment, go … We have been talking about food, refer to this particular website, this link, there's a game there, play it. Sometimes we can do that in class, sometimes they do that on their own. The other thing I try to do is to encourage them to have conversation partners. It really hasn't worked very well for me, especially because I have taught elementary levels and they are always so shy to speak.

Hazina also discussed how she used reflective writing in response to many of these activities as a way to foster autonomy:
One of the things that I have done in the past is to use journals for my Swahili classes. My expectations are that as students will pick what they have learnt in class and put it together to reflect what it is that they are learning in class, and not just what they are learning but to be able to apply that in their own lives.

Hazina outlined several Internet resources that she has found helpful in promoting learner autonomy:

There are different websites, whether they are university based websites or it's Quizlet or whatever the website. There are games online. I encourage my students to go and play those games online. I could use Quizlet. I’m also in the process of creating my own materials. In the past I’ve used other people’s materials but I also find that I need to design my own content. In which is going to be relevant to my students. I’m also doing that to also encourage them to acquire vocabulary. Quizlet is good because it has a variety of activities. It could be flashcards, it could be question and answer. They have different ways of learning the same thing. I find that very useful. The other thing that I have encouraged them to do on their own is to create, in small groups, create a skit. Then record it and … In the past I have them upload online. At least where I am now, they have media space where students can upload all kinds of materials whether they’re podcast or videos. That’s interesting for the students. Giving them an opportunity to go and search online and learn something. Learn new words online or do a task on their own they will consult the dictionaries when they stumble. When they can’t get the proper words that they want, they will get the dictionary, consult and get new
words and use them in the context. For example, when they do a task online especially where they can monitor themselves. They get feedback from the Internet.

**Latifah’s strategies for promoting learner autonomy.**

Latifah explained that authentic resources and experiences play a crucial role in fostering learner autonomy. She observed that she liked presenting her students with opportunities for making choices with regard to the use of resources, topics, and even the nature of assignments:

At some point I discussed with them, we came up with some topics about the Swahili culture. And specifically there were topics on food, clothing, the events that, the people in the Swahili will do and so the students were to prepare lessons on these topics and they were to present in class and basically teach their fellow students… Yes, I have invited a few people to my class here in the US. My fellow Swahili speakers to talk to my students and also leading the lessons, but back in Kenya the resources that were used would be maybe real things. Like if you are teaching vocabulary, you would carry related items to class.

When making a comparison of learning environments and contexts, Latifah reported that an informal learning environment makes rapport building and developing an immersive learning context easier:

I think it is even better when the context is informal because the students, their classroom environment is usually tense and formal and students may feel that teacher to student relationship, the gap maybe so wide but if it is done in an
informal environment, the students would be more free to speak. That is from my personal experience. Yeah, I would be freer with my teacher outside class than in class.

Like her colleagues, Latifah observed that interaction plays a pivotal role in fostering learning autonomy. She explained that:

…one way of learning a language is listening to people speaking it, so you try to master the words and the pronunciation and then get to know what they mean so you have to interact with the speakers maybe if they mention a word you have to try to say a word and then ask them what it means and then master the meaning.

To promote this role, Latifah encourages her students to attend conversation hour where they get an opportunity to interact in the target language with others.

We also have conversation hours where I speak with my students, I try to make them speak up the Swahili they know so that if they make mistakes we can try to rectify. I have to do all to make them speak Swahili. My students usually come for conversation hours. Sometimes with me, sometimes with a fellow teacher who usually goes to class with me. They would meet her and discuss, talk to her in Swahili […] and it helps them develop their Swahili skills. We also do oral exams like midterm and yeah, so such kind of meetings were the students get to speak out their language they have learned already with the chance they could express themselves, yes.
In regards to collaboration and peer influence, Latifah explained that she creates activities that target student learning autonomy. She believes that collaboration facilitates confidence in taking charge of one’s own learning:

I get the time for the students to speak directly with others, and also the activities they do in class. Sometimes I ask them to sit in groups of two or three and work on some questions and [then ask them to] tell the class what they found. When they do such kind of tasks, I feel like they have had the chance to do it on their own and so at least I give them a chance as opposed to me lecturing the whole time.

Latifah mentioned a number of Internet resources that she utilizes to promote students’ learning autonomy, even though her students are often more technologically savvy than she is. Personally, she prefers YouTube for pronunciation exercises and Google for searching the meaning of vocabulary words. She explained:

Yes, I do a lot of Google Translate, but we have sites that we have learned in my CALL class sites likes NearPod, and also well they are quite many. For classroom lessons… most of them use PowerPoint presentations and their research is based on the Internet mostly. My students are able to prepare presentations and they would even paste the links so that they just show me videos straight from their websites.

She went on to describe other resources she uses in the classroom:

I usually project the pictures using the projectors so that they can see, I prepare slides and they can see the pictures and name them and try to construct sentences.
Just like I explained, the students in the US prepare their presentations and they are able to include pictures and videos and audio materials.

**Almasi’s strategies for promoting learner autonomy.**

While the instructors had a variety of strategies that they used to promote learner autonomy among their students, the language learners themselves also developed useful strategies. Out of everything she had experienced, Almasi explained that music and people in authentic settings made her feel the most immersed in the culture:

Just coming into contact with the music and the dancing because my husband is a musician and he had a band and that’s how I met him, I was doing a documentary about these refugees and what they do and he was a refugee and so that’s how we met through this band I was documenting it. So, it was only natural to me to learn more about him and Kiswahili as well. My husband’s first language is not KiLingala, my husband’s first language is Kiswahili. He grew up speaking that, he doesn’t even know his supposed ancestral mother tongue but he knows Kiswahili. Before he learned Lingala he spoke Kiswahili. Although emphasis placed on Congolese people is Lingala.

Almasi insisted that her authentic experiences such as travelling widely in Africa and other places have had positive outcomes of language immersion opportunities with native speakers and other authentic materials. First, she explained:

What really introduced me to certain aspects of [East African country] culture more so like the music, and the foods and the different ethnic groups… And so,
you know, listening to…I will hear Kiswahili spoken and never really thought twice about wanting to seriously actually learn the language.

On several occasions, Almasi visited the market and learned how to bargain in Swahili. For her, the experience was self-rewarding and motivating. She posited that such experiences in authentic situations or contexts are needed to facilitate language-learning autonomy:

I feel like if you don’t have this chance to speak with people in real context like outside the classroom to be able to say you study Kiswahili is nice but like the only time I have been made to speak Kiswahili outside the classroom in a setting that I say that is real.

Almasi confessed that after being exposed to authentic contexts, she often researches unfamiliar vocabulary words she has heard:

So I had to sometimes go back into my dictionary, go back into my little booklets, Internet look for stuff up or just to say or look at the flash cards to build my vocabulary while I was there, and then that situation coupled with the fact that I have to speak Kiswahili I would say that now am studying Kiswahili in my mind, I don’t know anyone else’s definition.

Almasi acknowledged that Swahili is a dynamic language, explaining that different groups of people use Swahili differently.

Kiswahili is dynamic in Africa but I think in places like Namibia we don’t have Kiswahili speakers except like in refugee camps or like a few people who come wherever in East Africa. Its influential in the popular culture, because of my
Kenyan friends living there and doing music and being a part of like a newer generation of music and stuff, they started saying ‘cheza ngoma’ [play music] every Namibian now is saying the same and other Kiswahili words is just now part of the lexicon. And so, that for me is very fascinating. So they will be just like this is great! And I will literary be saying that I learned from people by just having conversations with people with my broken language because they were just happy to speak with me. Which was such a difference from learning from other contexts because people just didn’t have the time was like I was a joke, or I will hit artificial kind of learning environment so you don’t get to really have conversation. Then after sometime after being in Congo I came to some place where I realized that “Damn!” Most time I have spoken Kiswahili here really the only time am speaking English is when am speaking to my son.

Almasi credits her learning success to adjusting to various contexts. She often just listens and tries to make connections when faced with challenging scenarios or situations. At times, the complications caused by many Swahili dialects made it even more difficult for her to make connections.

Almasi believes that interaction plays a crucial role in shaping one’s learning autonomy and that language competence and performance are acquired through interacting with peers or speech communities of the target language. She explained:

I used to hold a very long conversation in Kiswahili because I studied it a lot and I spoke as much as possible and my friends were like surprised and admiring me […] You study it by speaking it, you study it by listening to it, by understanding
certain little grammar, but the grammar is very important. Because I feel like I am able to understand now things that were said in Shwambu [another language] because it is a Bantu language.

Almasi further explained that access to native speakers is very instrumental in building confidence, both in terms of speaking partners and of motivation. She explained that on many occasions she has used family and friends to fulfill her language-learning goal of interaction:

I was able to speak with [my husband’s] relatives on the phone, they were going crazy. They couldn’t believe it at all. First of all, there is this idea that if you are American you’re going to speak English, and if anything you will speak French… They couldn’t speak to me on the phone, they were laughing and talking about how am actually speaking Kiswahili. Our conversation was constantly interrupted before we even made a point. “hey she said this…hey she said that!! ha ha ha…” Like going crazy about it! it was a nice reception, so when I went there they were happy to meet me because they felt that there will be some automatic apprehension to wanting to speak Swahili for some reasons. In informal sense, I had a great time speaking Swahili.

However, Almasi expressed disappointment that some of her Kenyan friends never spoke to her in Swahili in face-to-face or telephone conversations, but when using Internet resources such as chats, they consistently chatted with her in Swahili. She said, “My [people of a country in East Africa] friends never spoke to me in Kiswahili even though they will be on Internet, they can chat in Kiswahili and they are like I can’t believe it, I
am so amazed blah blah blah…” On the other hand, she acknowledged the role of the Internet in facilitating her language skills. She reported that she would often use the Internet to look for the meaning of words or create flashcards.

**Najma’s strategies for promoting learner autonomy.**

Najma explained that native speakers who she has met at the university are major resources for her, and that many of them are willing to support her any time she encounters a problem related to speaking Swahili:

There's also just a lot of native speakers on campus so I would run into them a lot and speak to them as well. I found it to not be too difficult at all because there was a lot of opportunity here… It's so much easier to learn when you're actually in the environment because you don't really have a choice. I liked that though. I like that it really pushed me to further my skills and actually be able to communicate with people. There would be some circumstances where I would have to go through two, three different words that mean similar things because I'd be talking to people who spoke different dialects so they wouldn't always quite understand what I was saying right off the bat. That really challenged me but I liked it.

Najma recalled situations while living overseas when her host family would be strict and not allow her to use English to explain anything she couldn’t explain in Swahili:

There would be certain days of the week where they wouldn't let me speak English so that really helped me. The biggest thing was that I lived in a neighborhood where there was a lot of kids and it seemed that my host family's
children were the most popular so different people's kids would come over a lot and they were kind of learning Swahili too so I would speak with them a lot. That really helped me because they weren't used to people who weren't speaking very proper Swahili so very quickly they would be like, "I don't think you're saying that right," or would just be very confused. That was probably the biggest thing that helped me with my grammar.

Najma believes that the support from her host family’s children and their visitors is what really helped her to grasp Swahili language skills in the relatively short time she was abroad for the intensive program.

According to Najma, interaction with children and other people played a significant role in promoting her language-learning autonomy while in Tanzania and after leaving. The following experience was her favorite:

I really enjoyed talking to people at the market because everyone there just assumed that I didn't know anything, I only spoke English, and I really enjoyed having actual conversations with people because I was buying jewelry at a little market near Arusha. I had a pretty long conversation with the woman there about all the different things she was making. She was so impressed that I could actually speak Swahili and she gave me a couple of bracelets for free because she was just really glad that somebody was speaking Swahili with her.

Among the other things Najma mentioned was the use of Internet resources in promoting her learning autonomy. She said, “One thing that I did really helped me with
like noun markers and different parts I made flash cards online so that really helped, and then making charts that are really consistent”.

**Adimu’s strategies for promoting learner autonomy.**

Like Najma, Adimu mentioned that being at a university provides opportunities for frequent interactions with native speakers of Swahili:

I mean we would meet each other and he would greet me in Swahili in the early days of it, thinking that everyone from Africa speaks Swahili. They say ...

"karibu," I say, "What does karibu mean?" and I say why I need to study this and it sounded good to me, and sometimes I go to class. If I can't catch something, I would see him and he would explain to me or I would see Kaka [brother] and then I say, "Mzee what does this mean?" and sometimes when you are speaking in English they would just speak some Swahili phrases forcing you to study it and be on top of it. Yeah, trying to help with some phrases and some simple phrases […] I am not shy, I just speak it if I am wrong, If I am wrong they correct me, so that is how I speak it. When you go home it is Swahili, on the bus it is Swahili, in the market it is Swahili, in the office it's Swahili. You're likely to catch up more.

Further, Adimu insisted that interaction cannot be ignored in learning a language. He explained that when one interacts with various people who speak a language, there are high chances of promoting confidence and independence in using the language. He said:

I mean of course apart from classroom, I speak to people who speak the main language and I am not shy, I just speak it even if I am wrong they correct me, so that is how I speak it. I constantly keep speaking, most of my friends are from
Swahili speaking countries, so I speak with them I learn new phrases and when I forget it they push me back by telling me some phrases. On campus you know some of my friends are Swahili instructors, some of my friends that we hang out with all speak Swahili. The Swahili world gives more avenues that people around would help you fill the gap or to help you keep going but the French by then I didn't have anybody around me.

Adimu also felt that the Swahili speakers he knows inspire and mentor him. Many of those speakers pursue different interests and majors from his, but he looks up to them for both personal and academic advice. He maintained that the feedback from his friends has advanced his language skills:

I mean that is when more like I evaluate myself by the feedback that I get from people who speak it [Swahili] like you [someone’s name] and some of my friends who speak Swahili, people who really speak it. Like you speak a phrase and I am like "ooh, yeah" like vizuri, you have done well and stuff like that.

Adimu believes that likewise, he has been a mentor to his peers:

Yeah, I think I influenced my friends and when I came people like you [and others] who were around, so my friends influenced me but I convince my classmates to take Swahili classes […] The Swahili world gives more avenues that people around would help you fill the gap or to help you keep going but the French by then I didn't have anybody around me.
Adimu mentioned the use of Internet resources as another secret behind his success in speaking Swahili. He emphasized that he makes use of simple tools to learn the language:

I go to YouTube; I go to YouTube sometimes in my spare moments. I just put let’s say Swahili lessons on YouTube and I would be doing some multi-tasking… People no longer carry dictionaries or books and stuff like that, but we all have smartphones and we all have mobile phones, we all have you know laptops, so something quick and snappy that's you touch it and stuff is there like some quick phrases in Swahili or key phrases in Akan key phrases in Wolof. You touch and it's like an app or more videos online or audios.

According to Adimu, apps are key language-learning components to have in one’s smartphone, because they are easy to both install and use in order to sharpen one’s autonomy in language learning. He said:

Like I said earlier, if you are studying an African language, if you're studying Swahili here in the US you might need certain things to back you up, like an app and I keep going back to it because it is the easiest and we are in a world of IT these days or some ready materials available online. Google Translate is good so those are some of the things that are ... Maybe CDs or recorded audio tapes but apps know no boundaries, so if it's good it is also going to be good back home.

**Fatuma’s strategies for promoting learner autonomy.**

Fatuma explained that when she was in graduate school she learned about Kamusi online tool. Kamusi online is an online Swahili dictionary for searching the meaning of
Swahili words and how those are used. Fatuma used Google Translate mostly when she wanted to do a quick translation of Swahili words and phrases. In addition to these, Fatuma expressed that listening to Swahili broadcasts on the radio, computer, and on the television helped her to become autonomous in using Swahili.

I think another thing that really helped was listening to broadcasts on the radio, or on the computer, or on the TV. Even if I couldn't understand, because like on [a broadcasting station in one of the East African countries], he [the anchor] talks so fast, and it would be so hard for me to follow, but just ... I really challenged myself to listen to those broadcasts, because I could pick out little bits of news stories.

Apart from online tools and broadcasting stations, Fatuma used resources such as textbooks, notebooks, and newspapers to improve her language skills. She explained:

I would always have a book in my pocket, and I would write down an unfamiliar word and look it up later, or I'd ask someone, "What does this mean?" And then I write it down and try to review it, and I think that's how I started to build vocabulary. Just in daily life.

In Fatuma’s view, this idea established her autonomy in the language significantly.

Like all other participants, Fatuma believes that interaction with people who speak the Swahili language developed her autonomy in the language. Being a researcher, she met women and children where she was engaged with various projects that required her to use the Swahili language. Fatuma confessed that, at times it used to be difficult to listen but with time she got used to the way people interact using the language. On the
other hand, she acknowledged that working with the children was the best thing for her because children are forgiving and they wouldn’t get offended when one makes a funny mistake. She described:

I was able to get into a place where I could hear people speaking it all the time, and hear the language being used, that's when it became real for me, because it was like, it wasn't about studying the formal construction of the grammar anymore, it was like, this is a living language. It doesn't matter so much ... I had to step back and let go of trying to be right, and proper, and correct all the time, and just try to use it. […] They're just like [children], "Ha-ha. She said the wrong thing." They just thought it was funny. They didn't get upset, I think that's the best way to really learn a language.

This with many other instances recurring helped Fatuma to be autonomous in using the Swahili language in many contexts she faced while conducting research in one of the East African countries.

Another strategy Fatuma applied is the use of authentic resources. In many occasions while in East Africa, she used to spend time by involving herself with social activities. She like cooking and chatting with people who spoke the Swahili language. According to her, social gatherings are an opportunity to practice the language. She described:

I did spend a lot of time cooking with people, and just sitting around chatting. People love to chat. That's a thing in East Africa. I feel like people sit around and drink tea and visit, and chat, all the time, and it's just like all this little small talk
and chatter. […] I talked to kids, I talked to old men, I talked to mommas, I talked to everybody. I think just that culture of chit-chatting was really helpful for me.

By and large, Fatuma expressed that spending time with native and competent Swahili speakers fosters one’s Swahili language learning autonomy. Being immersed in the language left her with no option other than to get involved and adapt with the language context. Generally, Fatuma emphasized that listening to people who speak the Swahili language, Swahili music, and hearing how people applied the use of the language in their daily lives significantly develops learning autonomy.

**Summary of Findings**

As previously explained in Chapter 4, the first phase of theme identification happened during the initial review of interview transcripts. I read and analyzed each transcript upon receipt, then conducted open coding using MAXQDA software, an analytic tool for qualitative data.

During the coding process, three themes that addressed the two research questions emerged. I then represented these themes to depict two main areas, where one area focused on addressing the first research question and the other two areas focused on the second research question. Furthermore, I classified the three primary themes into sub-themes. I summarized the findings for each research question and used exemplary quotes to illustrate themes and sub-themes.
Table 2

Themes, Subthemes, and Definitions for Research Question 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme/subtheme</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learner autonomy</strong></td>
<td>The understanding of the experiences that contribute to participants’ feeling of being independent in executing language learning and teaching tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivation</strong></td>
<td>A drive that propels someone to want to achieve a certain goal to completion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal interests &amp; creativity</strong></td>
<td>People’s preferences based on individual goals, objectives, aims, and desires. These are self-willed in nature and a fairly big determinant to embracing any change, innovation, or creativity in a field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal mentorship and role modeling</strong></td>
<td>Encouragement and motivation to pursue personal goals and ambitions from people who are successful and experienced in a manner that can be imitated by others.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Primary themes are bolded; subthemes are italicized.*

I describe the resulting themes in the summary of my research findings presented below.

**Results for Research Question 1**

In this research project, my first research question sought to explore how LCTL instructors and students understand and describe the phenomena of learner autonomy phenomenon. Using tables, I include summaries of the definition of identified themes, the frequency of occurrence for that theme and subthemes. As illustrated in Table 1, I identified *learner autonomy* as a primary theme.
The theme of learner autonomy is associated with the subthemes motivation, personal interests and creativity, and personal mentorship and role modeling, definitions of which are provided in Table 1. Table 3 shows how frequently the theme and subthemes appeared across the interview data.

Table 3.

Frequency of Theme and Subtheme for Research Question 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes and Subthemes</th>
<th>Total exemplar quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description of Learner Autonomy</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner autonomy</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal interests and creativity</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal mentorship and role modeling</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Primary theme is bolded; subthemes are italicized.

Learner autonomy.

This was the primary theme that emerged for Research Question 1. I defined this theme as the identification of the experiences that contribute to one’s feeling of independence in language learning and teaching tasks. Many participants perceived learning Swahili as a LCTL in various ways.

In-depth interviews revealed that the participants’ personal aspirations, interests, motivation, mentoring, and role models were intertwined in their conceptions of learner
autonomy. The description of learner autonomy was described using a total of 95 exemplar quotes (constituents) in the interviews.

In the following section, I describe the emerging themes and subthemes for the second research question; strategies used by LCTL instructors and students to promote learner autonomy.

**Results for Research Question 2**

In the second research question, I examine and describe strategies used by LCTL instructors and students to promote language learning and autonomy. In this section I present tables summarizing the definitions of identified themes and subthemes, frequency of occurrence, and the number of research participants that mentioned a specific theme and subtheme.

The primary themes were *experiences of learning autonomy* and *strategies for promoting language-learning autonomy*. As illustrated in the tables, I related each of these themes with several subthemes. The definitions for the latter three other themes are provided in Table 4. In Table 5, I also disclose the frequency of occurrence of each theme across participants’ interviews.

**Experiences of language-learning autonomy.**

The first theme for Research Question 2 was experiences of language-learning autonomy. This theme was further divided into three other subthemes: (a) *authentic language-learning experiences*, (b) *the role of interaction*, and (c) *peer influence and collaboration*. 
These subthemes are discussed below.

Table 4

**Themes, Subthemes and Definitions for Research Question 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes/Subthemes</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Experiences of Language-learning Autonomy**         | **Authentic language-learning experiences**  
Refers to real life experiences where students engage in a natural setting where they are immersed in an enabling environment that offers them opportunities for executing actual language tasks.  
**The role of interaction**  
One-on-one or face-to-face engagement with people with an aim of communicating using the target language.  
**Peer influence and Collaboration**  
Influence, encouragement, persuasion, from a friend or a colleague to act in order to achieve a certain objective in a supportive manner. |
| **Strategies for Promoting Language-learning Autonomy** | **Internet resources**  
Any resource/information extracted, downloaded, or used in the Internet or web by the LCTL learners in order to enhance or facilitate the acquisition of language-learning skills and autonomy.  
**Training and teaching experience**  
Includes skills of classroom control, lesson planning, material development and delivery in classroom and online platforms, and the period of time an instructor has been involved in professions related to teaching and learning.  
**Digital devices**  
Use of devices such as smartphones, cellphones (not smart), computers, iPads, tablets, iPods, apps, projectors, etc. |

*Note. Primary themes are bolded; subthemes are italicized.*
Table 5

*Frequency of Themes and Subthemes for Research Question 2*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes and Subthemes</th>
<th>Total Exemplar Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experiences of Language-learning Autonomy</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic language-learning experiences</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The role of interaction</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer influence and collaboration</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategies for Promoting Language-learning</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Autonomy</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet resources</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and teaching experience</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital devices</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Primary theme is bolded; subthemes are italicized.

**Authentic language-learning experiences.**

This subtheme refers to real life experiences where students engage in a natural setting where they are immersed in an enabling environment that offers them opportunities for executing actual language tasks. This subtheme was mentioned 88 times in all 18 interviews. My data revealed a relationship between engaging with authentic environments and fostering one’s autonomy in language learning. Authentic language manifested in two main spheres: learning environments/contexts and authentic resources, as discussed below.
Learning environments and contexts.

These are places – physical or virtual – where learning takes place. This study depicted numerous learning environments where instructors and students reported encountering phenomenal learning experiences.

Authentic resources.

This is the second area related to authentic language-learning experiences. This area incorporates anything used in a natural form; people, art, and other artifacts used to enhance learners’ experiences. Participants of this study demonstrated varied use of authentic resources to promote their learning autonomy. In this study, music was among the resources that captivated language learning.

Likewise, many participants expressed that living with Swahili native host families offered them many immersion opportunities that promoted their autonomy in the Swahili language. Some participants claimed that all they had to do was to adjust themselves to the hosts’ lifestyles.

The role of interaction.

This is the second subtheme for the first theme of the second research question. This refers to one-on-one or face-to-face engagement with an aim of communicating using the target language. This subtheme was mentioned 36 times by participants of this study. Through various activities, interaction was manifested consciously and subconsciously. In my interviews, the following forms of interactions emerged:
Social gatherings.

Many participants expressed that they utilized social gatherings to practice their language skills.

Daily activities.

These are day-to-day chores that people carry out. In East Africa, the language of communication in these activities is usually Swahili. While executing their tasks during their time overseas, participants reported that they found themselves actively using Swahili. Contextually, these activities include cooking, fetching water and firewood, laundry, farming, and construction. In essence, these activities contributed to the Swahili language learners’ autonomy.

Virtual or online activities.

In addition to coffee hours or guest speakers, conversations may take place in an online context where languages learners interact using online technologies such as video conferencing tools and voice-over gadgets like smartphones.

Peer influence and collaboration.

This includes acts of encouragement, persuasion, and working together with someone to achieve a certain objective. This subtheme manifested 24 times in various forms. Many participants claimed that peer influence and collaboration facilitated their achievement for becoming autonomous Swahili language speakers.

Strategies for promoting language-learning autonomy.

The second theme for Research Question 2 was strategies promoting language-learning autonomy. This theme was further classified into three three subthemes: (a)
training and teaching experience, (b) Internet resources, and (c) digital devices. The following section is a discussion of these subthemes.

**Training and teaching experience.**

This includes skills of classroom control, lesson planning, material development and delivery in classroom and online platforms, and the period of time an instructor has been involved in professions related to teaching and learning. This subtheme was mentioned 48 times by participants. Throughout my interview sessions, various forms of training and experience were manifested in our discussion. Most participants mentioned that Swahili is an option for the foreign language requirement held by many American universities. They did not have a choice as to whether or not they would take a foreign language. Due to this fact, many students opt for learning the language informally before actually enrolling in those classes to ease the overload associated with encountering the language for the first time.

**Internet resources.**

This subtheme refers to any resource or information extracted, downloaded, or used on the Internet by the LCTL learners in order to enhance or facilitate the acquisition of language learning skills and autonomy. This subtheme was mentioned 31 times by all nine participants in their interviews. Participants described the use of the tools illustrated in the table below to promote their autonomy.
Table 6

*Devices Use Distribution*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Digital Devices</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adimu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio/DVD player</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desktop Computer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smartphone/not Smartphone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projector</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iPad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notepad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Composite description.**

In this study, autonomy is likened to independence and is facilitated by speakers of a language connecting to each other with technology, forming speech communities, and making decisions as to what one wants to use as a learning tool. Autonomy is perceived as a phenomenon that takes time to achieve, and it can vary from person-to-person. From the perspective of participants in this study, I believe that one needs to adopt a multi-skill approach to become autonomous in varied contexts. This approach entails using a diverse pool of tools, media, and technologies.

Use of a wide variety of resources enhances students’ abilities to think creatively and critically. Moreover, providing a range of resources is equated to empowering learners to personalize their learning style to achieve their goals. From the views of participants, I can infer that instructors of LCTLs need to conduct a needs analysis task to determine what resources are required for learning and to address different personality types and learning preferences.

Collaboration is a 21st-century skill that requires students and instructors to be co-creators of learning content. In fostering this skill, teacher-to-learner and learner-to-learner support plays a significant role in fulfilling various learning needs. Similarly, collaboration offers opportunities for interacting with people of different language skill levels, such as social gatherings/events. From this study’s data, many participants acknowledge that social groups provide language learners with opportunities for immersion. Students make efforts to excel or compete with their peers. In most cases, this competition inculcates quality of self-directing themselves.
In learning, we have three domains: cognitive, psychomotor, and affective (Allen & Friedman, 2010). Typically, cognitive and psychomotor domains are usually advanced concerning their development. This study suggests that teachers play a vital role in developing the affective domain of their learners through motivating, mentoring, and role modeling. It is common to model learning behaviors, as was evidenced in the study. This implies that students can model themselves on an autonomous teacher.

There are more ways to sustain motivation. First, learners’ interests influence how learning outcomes will be attained. There is a significant connection between learners’ interests and students’ motivation. Students whose interests are considered when learning objectives are designed are motivated to achieve their goals. For instance, they can utilize tasks that not only require the application of language but also arouse their interest and engagement, such as cooking, singing or playing. Secondly, the use of web technologies such as interactive tools can make learners learn enthusiastically. Tools such as iPads, smartphones, video conferencing, chats, and social networking sites motivate students to collaborate, personalize their learning, and, most importantly, become autonomous. The other method of motivating students is the use of authentic resources. These resources may include people invited to interact with students, materials that teachers create or develop, or a simulated immersive experience in a classroom environment.

Training for language teaching is a common theme that emerged throughout this study. According to many participants, remaining on course by following some standards and procedures is a worthy thing to experience or explore. In a similar manner, contextual teaching and learning is seen as a beneficial aspect to learners. One point worth noting is
learning in an immersed environment where immediacy of problem solving is required to chart one’s way out of a language situation. Mostly, learners in immersed language contexts do not require any form of training to solve language-related tasks or problems.

Learning environments manifest themselves in diverse physical locations, context, and cultures that are both communal and personalized in nature. My data indicated that learning environments have some influence on students’ motivation and interaction with other people. Most of the participants use varied strategies to personalize their learning environment: building social networks, using online resources and smart tools such as smartphones, and collaborating with other learners. Both formal and informal environments are perceived to support instructors and students in attaining their targeted competency level. Also, the growth of social media appeared to accelerate an expanded community of learners both face-to-face and online.

Nonetheless, data gathered from this study also reveals that interaction plays a vital role in promoting one’s autonomy in the Swahili language. Contrary to the usual definition of learner autonomy—taking charge of one’s learning and independence (Holec, 1981; Little, 1995)—learner autonomy appears to rely on interpersonal relationships. Swahili learners have to depend on competent or Swahili native speakers for language practice activities and opportunities. The interaction is expressed through social behavior, face-to-face activity, and oral or written mediums found both in the physical and virtual worlds. Social gatherings, in and out of class activities, and daily chores provide opportunities for Swahili learners to engage in negotiations to understand the meaning of words, to seek clarification of words, and to make confirmations. The latter mentioned
aspects boost learners’ confidence in fostering their language-learning autonomy. Social interaction is a platform many instructors and students use to build relationships that are instrumental to raising language competence among learners. In essence, data from this study revealed that dependence and interdependence on interaction are crucial components in promoting the Swahili language learning autonomy.

This study disclosed significant peer influence among participants. Language instructors and students make decisions on what they model in the real world. The sense of belonging is a motivating factor for attaining a desired learning outcome or goal. Furthermore, peer influence catalyzes engagement among learners.

**Closing Comments**

The aim of this chapter was to describe experiences of instructors and students that define learning autonomy and strategies used to promote autonomy. Many exemplar quotes were used to illustrate their experiences in a LCTL context at a mid-sized midwestern university in the U.S. Participants’ experiences exhibited that the following aspects describe learner autonomy: motivation, personal interest and creativity, and personal mentorship and role modeling. Concerning strategies used to promote autonomy, authentic experiences and resources, interaction, and use of Internet resources and digital devices played a significant role in promoting language learning autonomy.
Chapter 6: Summary, Outcomes, and Implications

The purpose of this study was to describe the phenomenon of learner autonomy as experienced by instructors and students of LCTLs. The study sought to examine strategies utilized by LCTL instructors and students in promoting their language-learning autonomy. In this chapter, I present the summary of my study, outcomes, third tier member check, and implications for the field of instructional technology.

Summary of the Study

Learner autonomy is a vibrant topic in the field of second language teaching and learning. Many teachers and researchers have attempted to explore ways of promoting learner autonomy in language learning through various methods. In recent years, learner autonomy has aroused interest due to the emergence of new technology and educational innovations of the 21st century (Garrison, 2011; McLoughlin & Lee, 2010). Many scholars concur that learner autonomy is important because it enables learners to achieve their learning goals and attain learning independence (Benson, 2013; Reinders & Hubbard, 2013; Boud, 2012; Littlewood, 1996).

Today, language teaching and learning are evolving and adopting relatively new pedagogical direction with the use of new learning tools (Benson, 2013; Zhao, 2013; Thomas & Reinders, 2010). New learning tools, learning environments, sufficient information, and strategies are evolving at a relatively rapid pace (Levy & Stockwell, 2013; Zhao, 2013; Lai & Gu, 2011). Many people are developing interests in computer-assisted language learning and are embracing this interest in keeping up with the pace of the latest technology trends (Benson & Voller, 2014; Levy & Stockwell, 2013; Boud,
2012; Lee, 2011). Commonly taught languages such as Spanish, French, and German are attaining these (Somyürek, 2015; Barrete, 2013; Lee, 2011; Darasawang & Reinders, 2010;). Unfortunately, many people contend that a similar trend is not evident in other languages. LCTLs appear to lag behind the pace of new technology trends and evolving pedagogy.

Existing statistical projections in the U.S. indicate that learning in the 21st century will be self-managed and self-directed (Beetham & Sharpe, 2013; Garrison, 2011; McLoughlin & Lee, 2010; Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Currently, 68% of adults own a smartphone and 45% own a tablet computer, while 78% of adults under 30 years old own a laptop or desktop computer (Pew Research Center Report, 2015). Based on these statistics, learners and teachers will be required to have multiple skills and be able to multitask in many situations that require them to utilize these devices (Partnership for the 21st Century Skills, http://www.p21.org/about-us/p21-framework). Additionally, learners will be required to integrate functional and critical thinking skills in the media-suffused environment.

Critical to this dissertation is the observation made by Trilling and Fadel (2009) and Beetham and Sharpe (2013) that learning will be self-managed, self-directed, personalized, and require learners to be autonomous. My data indicated that most students are motivated to learn a language to achieve their personal interests and ambitions. With this intention, they work hard to acquire sufficient resources that enable them to attain independence in many language-learning contexts and situations. By all means, their efforts are channeled towards customizing their learning needs to reflect
their long-term career and research goals. For this reason, significant implications point towards exploiting different strategies aimed to promote students’ language-learning autonomy and to focus on how the instructors and students of LCTLs understand the phenomenon of learner autonomy. Notably, this study examines the strategies that instructors and students use to manage their search for Swahili learning resources, which may be limited and require greater forbearance.

I engaged LCTL research participants through one-on-one interviews and memoing to ensure that my findings reflected a full description of their conscious experience in relation to their accounts. I applied a transcendental phenomenological research design and Littlewood’s (1991) framework for developing learner autonomy to examine how LCTL instructors and students derive the meaning of learner autonomy in their learning experiences. Nine research participants from a mid-sized midwestern U.S. university were purposively selected in order to observe the relevancy of the sample.

In the data analysis, I utilized open coding to ensure a detailed understanding of learner autonomy and the experiences of instructors and students of LCTLs. I employed member checks, memoing, and constant comparative techniques to ensure that my interpretation was consistent with research participants’ thoughts and experiences.

In reference to a phenomenological research paradigm, the open coding process utilized van Kaam’s (1959, 1966; as cited in Moustakas, 1994) modified method of analysis of phenomenological data guided by two questions: (a) Does [a code] contain a moment of the experience that is a necessary and sufficient constituent for understanding it? (b) Is it possible to abstract and label it [that code]? Therefore, in the coding process, I
examined the meaning and essences of instructors and students attach to learner autonomy in the context of LCTLs. I explored the concepts and ideas of each participant’s story relative to the strategies and/or experiences they encountered when promoting language-learning autonomy, while at the same time examining potential themes or cases confirming already existing categories that those experiences portray (Littlewood, 1991).

I analyzed the data I imported to MAXQDA participant by participant while conducting cross-case analysis at the same time. This is consistent with constructing participants’ experiences by developing a full textual description which includes thoughts, feelings, examples, ideas, and situations that portray what comprises an experience (Vagle, 2014; Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). The aim was to develop conceptualizations that were based on thick, rich, detailed actual interview quotes of the experiences of research participants (Turner III, 2010; Patton, 2002). I subjected emerging themes for each participant to a further analysis with an aim of seeking to explore across case themes and categories that described the experience in a fairly detailed manner. This process is referred to as composite textual-structural description (Vagle, 2014; Moustakas, 1994;).

I presented the summary of my findings followed by a discussion of emergent themes and their thematic relationships consistent with the development of learner autonomy framework and phenomenological approach and context. The first level of theme identification occurred during the listing and preliminary grouping during the initial review of individual transcripts. I then identified relevant experience
(horizontalization), executed these case by case, and then conducted a cross-case open coding using MAXQDA software.

This dissertation was guided by two research questions:

a) How do LCTL instructors and learners describe the phenomena of learner autonomy?

b) What strategies do LCTL instructors and students use to promote learner autonomy?

Research Question 1 explored how LCTL college instructors and students of a mid-sized midwestern university in the U.S. conceptualized learner autonomy in the context of LCTLs. Description of learner autonomy was my first primary theme. This theme was defined as experiences that contribute to participants’ feeling of “taking charge” (Holec, 1981, p.3) or being independent in executing language-learning and teaching tasks. I further classified the exemplar quotes into five subthemes: (a) learner autonomy, (b) motivation, (c) personal interests and creativity, (d) and personal mentorship.

Research Question 2 examined strategies that instructors and students use to promote their language-learning autonomy in LCTL context. Two primary themes emerged in the second research question. The first emergent theme was experiences of language-learning. This theme was defined as real life experiences where students engage in a natural setting; are immersed in an enabling environment, whether real or simulated; and execute actual tasks. I further classified the exemplar quotes into three subthemes: (a) authentic language-learning experiences, (b) the role of interaction, and
(c) peer influence and collaboration. The second theme was strategies for promoting language-learning autonomy. I classified this theme into three subthemes: (a) training and teaching experience, (b) Internet resources, and (c) digital devices.

This study was guided by Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology approach that “emphasizes subjectivity and discovery of the essences of experience and provides a systematic and disciplined methodology for the derivation of meaning” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 45). The epistemological assumption underlying this research enabled me to take note of not just the outcomes of the study but also the entire research process as a whole. As such, constant reflection, which Moustakas (1994) explains that it provides an orderly and rich resource to analyze and make relatively accurate interpretations of an experience. My research design immersed me into the data provided by research participants. In the end, I was able to interpret and present participants’ experiences during my research process.

The review of literature of this study provided a conceptual background to my two research questions and rationale for exploring the understanding of learner autonomy and strategies used by students and instructors to foster that autonomy in LCTLs. Most concepts obtained from the literature review provided relevant theoretical tools for designing my research questions and procedures for collecting data.

**Research Outcomes**

**Learner autonomy.**

After an in-depth data analysis, participants’ experiences portrayed an assumption of control to attain personal learning freedom in executing language tasks. In this
research study, I postulate that learner autonomy is described and characterized by three major components: personal interests, personal mentorship, and motivation. I describe personal interests as one’s preferences based on individual goals, objectives, aims, and desires for achievement. Personal interests were exhibited by a plurality of my participants; most of them have interests in the African continent. Some participants had previously conducted research in East Africa and had had to rely on gatekeepers for their research needs, while others were motivated to become autonomous with the spoken language before pursuing their research interest in East Africa.

According to my findings, personal mentorship is closely related to learner autonomy. Most participants have personal mentors whom they emulate in the process of becoming autonomous. I perceived this as an indicator because my participants are a reflection of their role models. Their language-learning agenda is catalyzed by the success of people who teach them Swahili, or people who appear like their future selves.

Motivation featured as a psychological component that influences a person to become an autonomous learner. After an in-depth analysis of my participants’ responses, I describe motivation as a drive that propels Swahili learners to become autonomous in learning tasks for attaining competency in the Swahili language.

**Strategies used by LCTL instructors and students to promote learner autonomy.**

In this research, participants reported several strategies they use to promote learner autonomy. In the context of my study, I describe a learning strategy as any resource or information extracted, downloaded, or used in the physical world or the
Internet to enhance or facilitate the acquisition of independent language-learning skills (Bowen, 2012; Motteram, 2013). The following are the strategies used to promote learner autonomy in Swahili language teaching and learning:

**Experiences of language-learning autonomy.**

Experiences of language-learning encompass many components. In this study, the following components were noted: (a) *authentic language-learning experiences*, (b) *the role of interaction*, and (c) *peer influence and collaboration*.

**Authentic language-learning experiences.**

Swahili learners utilized learning environments and contexts and authentic resources to ensure success in Swahili as a LCTL. This study revealed that instructors and students utilized both physical and virtual environments to promote their learning autonomy. In the physical environment, participants are immersed in a culture which causes them to appreciate the value of accessing authentic materials.

This research data revealed that authentic language-learning experiences can be achieved through traveling widely in Swahili-speaking regions. Although there is no officially established length of time spent there that is considered adequate, I can speculate that shorter periods of time ranging between 4 to 8 weeks are significantly adequate to experience a phenomenon. Besides traveling, living with host families that spoke Swahili reinforced learners’ efforts to become autonomous individuals. The host families’ environment provided language learners opportunities for informal interactions that boosted their confidence.
Many participants cited real life experiences where instructors and students engage in a natural setting, immersed in an enabling environment that is real or simulated to execute language-learning tasks. There was a wide range of elements that characterized this strategy. In all the encounters, research participants had experienced real life situations that forced them to be resilient in their immersed contexts. These contexts and environment included the following: food and cooking culture, music, living with hosts of the target language, and engagement of language learners with local communities of the target language.

Even though this study did not examine whether meeting many native speakers of Swahili was a reinforcing factor for learner autonomy, I concluded from my data that interacting with many native speakers presents a psychological advantage for practicing a language. In this study, I viewed the speakers as authentic resources to be utilized by Swahili learners. In the same way, other authentic resources such as music, cooking food and executing other household chores with host families presented Swahili learners with authentic opportunities to practice speaking. Comparatively, learners with limited traveling opportunities had alternative ways of practicing Swahili, such as a Swahili coffee hour, which functioned as a simulated environment where learners and other speakers of Swahili met and interacted informally on varied topics.

*The role of interaction.*

One-on-one or face-to-face engagement with people was common among many participants. In this study, interaction was perceived to play a vital role in building relationships and contributing towards learners’ confidence in using Swahili. As a
strategy, it was beneficial because of its immediacy with regard to feedback and necessary help. Participants’ experiences involved exploiting all the possible opportunities for interacting with native speakers of Swahili or competent speakers of the language. Interaction was achieved through the following key avenues: social gatherings, daily activities, virtual, and online activities. As a footnote, participants acknowledged that they are lucky that the mid-sized Midwestern university where this research was conducted has many native speakers of Swahili.

**Peer influence and collaboration.**

Most research participants credited their success to the support, influence, and collaboration that they received from others in order to achieve their language goals. Admittedly, it is a common occurrence for family members, friends, and even strangers to aid Swahili learners in authentic environments. Although it is an unsolicited strategy, it appeared to work positively for participants. I can conclude that these people form supportive structures for promoting learner autonomy. From the participants’ perspectives, these people included friends, colleagues, peers, instructors, and even prominent personalities.

**Training and teaching experience.**

These include skills in classroom control, lesson planning, materials development, delivery in face-to-face and online platforms, and the period of time an instructor has been involved in professions related to teaching and learning of Swahili as a LCTL. All of the instructor participants concurred that training to be a LCTL instructor is a crucial strategy for promoting learner autonomy, and most reported undergoing formal teacher
training. Summarily, the analysis of their responses exhibited a general consensus that an autonomous learner should apply the following principles:

1. Set goals for teaching and learning.
2. Raise awareness of conscious and critical thinking.
3. Apply foreign language teaching standards.

**Internet resources.**

My research data reveal the use of multiple Internet resources as a strategy for promoting learning autonomy. Resources used include:

**Online chats/videos.**

Real-time communication over the Internet was usually short and aimed at getting quick replies. Research participants reported that when faced with a challenging context, online chats were efficient in reclaiming control of the situation. Most participants reported using Skype and Google Hangout to interact with native Swahili speakers.

**Flashcards.**

Since the instructor is not always present to help in reinforcing learned content, most learners used both online and tangible cards to practice vocabulary. Particularly, most participants used Quizlet, which is an online learning tool used for creating, uploading, and studying vocabulary skills (Quizlet.com).

**Google Translate.**

This is a multilingual translation machine provided by Google to translate speech and text. This was the most popular tool for my participants. Due to easy accessibility,
participants felt confident referring to and revisiting it whenever they were faced with language tasks that they perceived as difficult.

**Kamusi Online.**

This is an online Swahili dictionary, which existed before Google Translate for Swahili was created. Most participants noted that its accessibility and instantaneous nature made it easy for them to explore.

**YouTube videos.**

YouTube videos were popular among all participants, because they could search for various topics of interest. Most of them observed that they use videos to practice listening and pronunciation of the target language.

**Social media.**

This was also very popular among my participants; most of my research participants reported to have utilized sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp to communicate with fellow students, instructors, and native speakers of Swahili.

**Internet.**

This is a platform that many other tools rely heavily on, but it offers resources pertaining to Swahili discourse that are not available on other tools. That makes it difficult to ignore the importance of the Internet in executing language-learning tasks. Among the resources mentioned in this category were Swahili websites; broadcasting stations such as BBC Swahili, VOA Swahili, and Radio China; and Swahili interactive games.
Digital devices.

Digital devices include the use of devices such as smartphones, cellphones (not smart), computers, iPads, tablets, iPods, apps, and projectors. In reference to my research data, many participants hailed the resourcefulness of new technology. They reported that the emergence of smartphones and other devices has made language-learning bearable and conveniently achievable through the click of a button. Many participants reported that they could access computer labs, borrow devices like laptops and iPods, and further access troubleshooting services whenever they need. Indeed, each of my research participants owned a smartphone. These devices served as a prerequisite to the use of Internet resources.

In the following section, I will attempt to conceptualize these outcomes with literature review findings.

Conceptualizing Phenomenological Outcomes with Literature Review Findings

The concept of *autonomy* was initially conceptualized within the field of language education in the late 1960s in response to ideals and expectations aroused by political turmoil in Europe (Benson, 2013; Ball, 2012; Jasanoff, 2011). Autonomy, or “the capacity to take charge of one’s own learning” (Holec, 1981, p. 3), was perceived as a product of learning determined by learners themselves (Ambrosio, 2010; Benson, 2013; Little, 2007; Littlewood, 1996), and Henri Holec, the “father” of learner autonomy, first coined the term *learner autonomy* in 1981. The concept of autonomy became widespread in the 1980s and 1990s as research continued to provide new insights. One aspect common to many scholars is that of a learner taking charge or control of his or her
learning path (Tomlinson, 2014; Benson, 2013; Boud, 2012). My research outcome indicates that learners have reinvented their autonomy by having an aim of attaining autonomy in the Swahili language brought on by personal interests and propelled by motivation from personal mentors and roles models. This finding is consistent with other researchers who concluded that personal involvement and the capacity to make and carry out choices promotes autonomy (Benson, 2013; Wang, 2011; Littlewood, 1996; Little, 1995).

In Littlewood’s (1991) framework for developing autonomy, learner autonomy is characterized by several components: motivation, personal learning contexts, and meanings. My findings consistently indicated some similarities with Littlewood (1991), although he mainly focused on roles of autonomy in different contexts, while my study examined what strategies learners employed in various contexts. Thus, I describe learner autonomy using three components: personal interests, personal mentorship, and motivation.

Previous literature indicates that autonomy has closely been linked to self-access (Benson, 2013; Reinders, 2010), independence (Benson & Voller, 2014; Reinders, 2010), and self-directedness (Cooker, 2011; Murray, Gao & Lamb, 2011; Reinders, 2010). These aspects are also evident in my findings. Many experiences of my participants were based on the individual’s preferences and effort when learning Swahili in various contexts.

Second language (L2) learners are motivated to learn a language when learning is based on their interests (Benson, 2013; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013; Boud, 2012; Lee,
2011; Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998). Evidence from this study is consistent with these ideas; many of my participants had a vested interest in East Africa. As a result, many activities they pursued were a reflection of their learning goals. Participants gave examples of activities of interest that they pursued during the process, such as music, food, technology, and traveling. In this research, I postulate that these activities are pertinent to the promotion of language-learning autonomy. Interest-oriented activities tend to enrich and sustain students’ engagement and interaction in the process of learning a language.

Previous studies have reiterated the vital role that motivation plays in language learning (Benson, 2013; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013; Lee, 2011; Murray, Gao & Lamb 2011). This research data revealed that motivation is instrumental in understanding and promoting learner autonomy. Particularly, instructors acknowledged that motivation is a contributing factor to Swahili learners’ success, while students adopted the concepts of identifying learning needs, setting goals, and working towards attaining those goals.

Existing research literature shows that learner autonomy can be fostered using various approaches: resource-based, technology-based, learner-based, classroom-based, and curriculum-based (Benson & Voller 2014; Gu, 2013; Benson, 2011, 2013; Boud, 2012). In this research, learner autonomy was conceptualized by the adoption of most of these approaches/strategies. For instance, access to learning resources is one of the strategies commonly applied by many learners to enhance their learning in varying contexts. In this study, participants demonstrated agency of acquiring useful Swahili. Specifically, digital and Internet resources such as smartphones, social media, and websites, among others, are just but a few of the resources that were widely used.
Although most scholars acknowledge the distinctiveness of each of the five strategies I cited above, I observed that technology acts as a common denominator for intertwining these strategies. Likewise, other scholars note that technology plays a role in accelerating the exploration of those approaches (Benson 2011, 2013; Schwienhorst, 2012; Lee, 2011; Breivik, 2005). This research provides an additional theoretical base needed to help instructors and students of Swahili as a LCTL in establishing Internet footprints for LCTLS.

As mentioned early in the literature review, 21st-century learning will be characterized by learning how to learn and acquire new knowledge (Johnson et al., 2014). Technology plays a vital role in this claim because it influences the ways people communicate, learn, work, and live (O’Connor, McDonald & Ruggiero, 2014; Garrison, 2011). This assertion has been conspicuous in my research findings; participants utilized many technological tools that aided in searching new knowledge.

Historically, many scholars have focused on learner strategies research for learner autonomy (Cohen, 2014; Benson, 2013; Boud, 2012;). However, in recent years, the shift is seemingly changing in favor of active engagement by the learner.

**Third-Tier Member Checking**

This section includes a third tier member check with research participants and it entails not only pairing the research outcomes with literature as illustrated above but also participants’ views relative to outcomes and the researchers’ conceptualizations.

After making a summary of outcomes for this study, I went back to the research participants for the third time to ask them what they thought or viewed about my
conceptualization of the research outcomes. The third tier member checks were conducted in person and lasted 25 – 30 minutes. The following were my goals for conducting a third-tier member check with the research participants:

1. Member checking research outcomes based on the first and second interview with a view to refining, refuting or confirming the outcomes of the interviews.
2. Checking with research participants, the connection between the outcomes and the researchers’ conceptualization of the outcomes.
3. Deliberating on the interrelationship of the research outcomes and their implications for practice and research in the field of instructional technology.

After presenting participants with a summary of outcomes, most of them confirmed the outcomes as a true reflection of their thoughts as expressed during the interviews. As a matter of fact, all the themes I presented featured prominently in the following order:

**Experiences of language-learning.**

The participants of this study reiterated that authentic experiences, interaction, and collaboration are vital for success in constructing knowledge. Many participants confirmed that without collaborating with their peers or competent language speakers, their language skills would have remained poor. This is consistent with constructivist theory that informs the conceptual framework of this study. In constructivism, learning is viewed as an active process where people construct new knowledge collaboratively (McLoughlin & Lee, 2010; Liaw, Chen & Huang, 2008; Bruner, 1996). Participants acknowledged their active role in engaging native speakers of Swahili. According to
them, their active participation in trying to solve language-related problems in immersed situations facilitated discovery of new knowledge in most authentic ways. This is also consistent with many scholars whom I reviewed in my literature; the emphasis of learning is on the learner, where learning entails personal involvement in exploring resources to find solutions to problems (Benson, 2013; Wang, 2011; Bruner, 1996; Little, 1995). In Littlewood’s (1991) framework for developing learner autonomy, ability to create personal learning contexts, communication strategies, and expressing meaning are viewed as crucial tools for promoting one’s autonomy. Participants of this demonstrated this through applying their skills in making and searching for resources and interacting with various competent speakers.

**Strategies for promoting learner autonomy.**

In relation to strategies, I shared with my participants some of the resources they mentioned in the interviews. In the same way, all agreed to the fact that the resources looked familiar to them. As a matter of fact, they had more suggestions, which I will mention in the participants’ recommendations section.

**Conceptualization of learner autonomy.**

When I described what I believe the participants implied by their descriptions of learner autonomy, they all concurred with the subtheme of motivation followed closely by other subthemes of personal interests and the role of a mentor in shaping one’s autonomy. Most of them confirmed having mentors whom they model for specific purposes. Participants confirmation in these subsections’ subthemes is consistent with the framework I used in this study (Littlewood, 1996). Ultimately, motivation is key in the
framework. Through motivation, other aspects such as confidence, knowledge, and skills are manifested.

However, owing to their relative satisfaction, my research participants had additional recommendations that prior to the third-tier member check had not been mentioned.

1. While acknowledging one mid-sized midwestern university’s Swahili program in the U.S., they sought to know how Swahili programs in other institutions are run. Their inquiry particularly touched on what other learners learn (curriculum design) and how they learn (instructional design). This study’s participants speculated that there were no unified or standardized curriculum and course designs for those learning Swahili as a LCTL, not only in the midwestern region, but also in the U.S. as a whole. One participant gave examples of other commonly taught languages such as Spanish, German, and French that seem to have a fairly structured curriculum and course design.

2. Content creation and development of Swahili learning resources. Although this suggestion appeared in this study as a theme outcome, participants’ concerns were in line with not having a developed resource bank for Swahili resources. Participants expressed the need to mobilize resources through collaborating with instructors, students, and other stakeholders to create a centralized open source resource bank for Swahili.

3. While acknowledging the role of interaction in language performance, most participants expressed dissatisfaction in relation not having social networks
where Swahili learners can use the opportunity to practice the language.
Participants suggested the creation of social networks and language community structures where learners may connect and motivate each other in applying their language skills.

In view of these suggestions, the following section is a description of some possible implications.

**Implications for Practice in Instructional Technology**

I feel obliged to acknowledge the fact that whatever I imply for future consideration in this study might be understood as useful to some and not useful for others. In lieu of this, the implications presented here should be understood as options, alternatives, or simply guidelines for consideration in situations deemed to be applicable. In other words, I am advocating for instructors, students, and educators to play an active role in making choices and staying up-to-date with technological developments that promote learner autonomy not only in LCTLs but also in learning generally. Instructional technology enthusiasts can be supportive by collaborating with instructors and learners in integrating emerging ideas and ensuring that learners have opportunities to explore and implement these practices. The following are some implications for practice in instructional technology:

1. According to the Pew Research Center, today, 68% of adults own a smartphone and 45% own a tablet computer (Anderson, 2015). Smartphone ownership is nearing saturation point, where 86% of those owning these devices are aged between 18-29. On computer ownership, 78% of adults of
adults under 30 years old own a laptop or desktop computer. These statistics are important because they seem to reveal how people connect with each other with information, how they spend time, and how they engage with information they share. 21\textsuperscript{st}-century projections indicate that learning will be characterized by learning how to learn and acquire new knowledge. Therefore, learner-centered pedagogy should be utilized in the future to include students’ interests, aspirations, and motivation. In my view, this will empower students to take charge of their learning. Students will have leeway to choose language content and collaborate in both virtual and physical environments to achieve desired learning outcomes. This implies that instructional designers should consider personalized instructional designs for teaching and learning.

2. Collaboration is among the 21\textsuperscript{st}-century skills (Partnership for 21\textsuperscript{st} Century Skills), so instructional designers and content instructors should consider partnering or collaborating with learners in creating and developing LCTL online resources. The new paradigm shift perceives students not only as consumers but also as creators of resources. To achieve this goal, consider inculcating the culture of critical thinking, creativity, and innovation through mentoring and playing a guiding role. Sound instructional design principles and support should be made accessible to learners in order to facilitate their active in material development. Also, key aspects facilitating student engagement should be included in course designs.
3. My data revealed correlations between peer influence, collaboration, authentic experiences, and achievement of learner autonomy in LCTLs. These findings were consistent with other previous studies claiming that authentic environment plays a vital role in promoting learning autonomy (Benson, 2013; Boud, 2012; Schwienhorst, 2012; Chang, Lee, Wang, & Chen, 2010;).

As instructors, there is a need to make the formation of communities of practice a priority for LCTL learners. Through these communities, instructors and learners may connect, engage, and share information. The growing ubiquity of social networks presents opportunities to network using social networks like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and so on. Indeed, this is also a good platform for exploiting the authentic language-learning environment.

**Implications for Future Research**

This is probably the first phenomenological research of its kind exploring learner autonomy in Swahili as a LCTL in a mid-sized midwestern university in the U.S. While the findings of this study are an addition to the body of literature in learner autonomy, my research opens the door to investigate other related areas.

1. This study examined learner autonomy in LCTLs but utilized only nine participants, all of whom are or have been connected to the same university, so the sample size might raise generalizability issues. It would be reasonable to conduct a study of learner autonomy in LCTLs in other contexts that are not bound by physical boundaries or limited to the U.S only. Using a different
methodological approach that utilizes a larger sample may be an option that needs to be considered in the future.

2. 21st-century learning is characterized by an abundance of information where learning is self-managed and self-directed (Collins & Halverson, 2009; Johnson, Adams Becker, Estrada, & Freeman, 2014; Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Future research should investigate the influence of technological device ownership on learner autonomy and language pedagogy of less commonly taught languages.

3. This study may inform the future production of a questionnaire. The process of utilizing a phenomenological approach of interviewing and memoing may be used in future to create items for a multidimensional scale. This study produced ten major themes used to describe learner autonomy. Future research should generate questionnaire scale items based on the findings of this study to triangulate my findings quantitatively.

4. A longitudinal study investigating experiences of LCTL instructors and students over a longer time span of 1 to 3 years may yield to a relatively greater understanding of the phenomenon of learner autonomy in less commonly taught languages. Additionally, comparative studies examining experiences of instructors and students in different campus environments would be an interesting area to investigate in future.
A Critique of my Research Methods and Procedures

In this study, I considered a phenomenological research approach as the best fit for this research, since the goal of this study was to understand the essence of the phenomenon of learner autonomy in LCTLs by examining instructors and students who had experienced the phenomenon. This process involved several long, in-depth interviews with my participants with an aim of searching for patterns that could describe the individuals’ and group experiences as a whole. Despite the suitability of this approach, a few flaws were not overlooked.

Qualitative data is inherently difficult to analyze due to issues of bias and subjectivity. In qualitative research, the researcher is regarded as a data collection instrument (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2002). For this reason, it was difficult for me to detect or prevent my biases in the process. Also, the subjective nature of my data itself was an impediment in establishing reliability and validity of approaches and information. However, I ensured rigor and credibility despite both of these challenges through member checks, peer debriefs, bracketing, and thick description to minimize these biases. Second, qualitative research has highly dense data that is almost impossible to organize. While bracketing was used to help organize the data, I acknowledge that there is nothing like pure bracketing, so there is a possibility that this might have interfered with my data interpretation. Also due to its high density, it was difficult to present data in a manner that is usable and understood by my readers. Additionally, phenomenology does not produce generalizable data. Therefore, my results cannot be used to generalize learner autonomy phenomenon in other contexts.
**Closing Comments: Personal Reflection, Future Direction, and Advice to Teachers and Language Learners**

Throughout my education in the U.S., I have been inspired by the new knowledge I have acquired. My graduate degree in applied linguistics opened doors, not only for pursuing a doctorate degree in Instructional Technology but also for other research opportunities in the U.S. Particularly, I was impressed with the supportive learning and mentoring environment I experienced over time. Indeed, it would be deceitful if I failed to acknowledge my heightened professional and academic growth.

I believe in gradual growth influenced by a community of practice who share similar interests and/or common goals. The research and dissertation writing processes were relatively difficult but intriguing. Over the years, I regarded myself as sequentially and steadily evolving into a technology enthusiast. My language teaching background and interest have continually increased my passion for technology. For me, success comes from what strengthens my desire and drive of wanting to become an autonomous, life-long learner in the 21st century. I believe that this is synonymous with foundational pillars of success in my scholarly endeavors.

I entered this research process with an open mind and a background of professionalism. I have previously held various roles as a Swahili instructor, an IT support specialist for faculty and teaching assistants, as an associate director of the language resource center, and finally, as a researcher. These roles have inculcated in me the value of building and maintaining relationships with people. I am obliged to mention that research is a process of initiating, developing, and maintaining healthy relationships
with people around you. These relationships have enabled me to gain people’s trust; in fact, the trust I earned from my participants enabled me to pursue and develop an in-depth inquiry and follow-up probes in my interviews.

In the research process, maintaining these roles requires earnest effort, not just when gathering data but also in writing objectively. Naturally, my orientation is towards language teaching in a computer-mediated environment. To avoid bias, I kept a journal of all the information I knew about the research problem and my participants. Also, I practiced epoche to ensure that credibility of data gathering, analysis, and reporting was maintained. I have a history of collaboration with many of my participants in various capacities, and so we understood each other’s perspectives on teaching Swahili. Rather than viewing this history as a weakness, I believe it enabled me to establish trust and facilitate the opening up of participants. Helping people with technology issues is a passion I continue to cherish. As a technologist, I feel rewarded for empowering instructors and students to use technology for instructional purposes. Nevertheless, in this research, my standpoint was that of a researcher. I had to suspend all other roles to achieve this goal of examining the phenomenon of learner autonomy from a researchers’ perspective.

One major outcome of this dissertation process is the realization that a successful research process has three phases: research as a life-long learning process, research as a collaborative process, and research as passion and interest. As a life-long learning process, it would be premature to say that this is the final research project I will conduct or participate in. For collaboration, I am a beneficiary of peer-related insights from many
brainstorming and debriefing sessions, both premeditated and sporadic. I have learned to utilize both positive and negative critique to improve my weaker points. Finally, research is a passion and interest. This research project was inspired by my passion for language and technology. In my opinion, lack of passion is equated to a lack of vision and mission. I derive my passion from working in the language resource center; it is a strategic opportunity for helping people achieve their learning needs. Indeed, I have witnessed many faculty members changing from technology skepticism to full ownership of many skills they learned from me.

My long-term goal is to develop a simplified model of promoting learner autonomy in language-learning. The world is shifting paradigmatically to embracing technology. Many areas have yet to exploit this shift; specifically, Swahili as a LCTL is lacking. I plan to promote the creation and development of Swahili online resources. Speculations of uplifting the Swahili language to be one of the UN languages are rife in the air, so my goal is to offer technical support in the creation of Swahili materials in the near future and to become an expert consultant in instructional design and technology fields. In the meantime, I will offer the following advice to teachers and students who may need to develop their learning autonomy successfully not only in the Swahili language but also in other LCTLs.

Advice to Teachers and Language Learners

As a result of this research data, I will advise that if you plan to study one of the less commonly taught languages, you will need to develop a strong sense of learner autonomy to be successful. Here is how you may develop your learning autonomy.
Advice to learners.

Understanding your interests will enable you to refine your focus on learning objectives, aims, goals, and desires for achievement. These traits are pertinent to influencing how a learner will formulate a plan for attaining independence in executing not only language-learning tasks but also solving other real-life problems. Forthwith, personal interests provide one with alternatives of choosing relevant resources to meet the threshold a person may require realizing one’s language-learning potential. Also related to interests is motivation and personal mentorship. First, motivation plays a vital role when pursuing personal interests. Language learners will need to devise ways of sustaining their learning motivation. This motivation may be both intrinsic and extrinsic. According to my research data, the two kinds of motivation are instrumental to language learners. Secondly, personal mentors contribute significantly increasing one’s motivation towards achieving a particular goal. In most cases, students who work towards imitating their mentors succeed in becoming autonomous just like their personal mentor. This success is because of significant support their mentors bestow upon them.

The world is evolving fast technologically. This evolution presents many learning tools and opportunities. For learners, emergent technology tools may be challenging regarding the choice of suitable language tools that promote learning autonomy. Therefore, I propose that students may consider choosing authentic Swahili language learning resources. In this study, my data revealed the need to exploit authentic learning environments and contexts that manifest in the form of social interaction, collaboration, peer influence, and Internet resources. Utilizing these resources is not the only norm,
learners will need to consider creatively exploring options of blending their personal interests to maximize the use of these resources to achieve language learning autonomy.

**Advice to teachers.**

My advice to teachers is to play a facilitator role in providing a learner autonomy-enhancing environment. Teachers are not only models but also a valuable learning resource for learners. Teachers should be able to mold and shape themselves to illuminate autonomy in their teaching. Some of the ways they can achieve this role are through creatively creating reliable resources for language learning, simulating immersed learning contexts, and collaborating with both learners and resource persons who come in the form of native speakers of a language in general.

Teachers will need to equip themselves with suitable pedagogies and tools that come as a result of emerging experience. Since these teachers are learners’ mentors, it is important to brace themselves with sufficient skills to influence their students during mentorship. Equally important, their primary goal should target the development of learner autonomy. Fostering an understanding of web 2.0 tools may be a relatively good way to encourage interaction among LCTL learners. Teachers need to equip themselves by either undertaking professional development courses or initiating individual efforts in exploring the use and integration of web 2.0 tools in the learning of Swahili and other LCTLs. From my findings, the following web 2.0 tools and applications may apply: social networking sites e.g., Twitter, Skype and Facebook, Voice Thread, Blogger, Socrative, and iMovie. According to my findings, these are just but a few tools that can help to promote learner autonomy and exploit iPedagogy presented upon by the 21st-
century learning methodology. Not only will these tools promote autonomy but they will also encourage the teachers to let go control.

Teachers may need to reconsider revisiting their training and teaching experience. In this study, learners embraced new learning methods and tools. Teachers need to re-think their teaching strategies in order to address emerging technology and how that technology can be aligned to focus on developing an autonomous learner who lives in a technology-enhanced world. Mostly, the new technology trend presents an opportunity for promoting a learner-centered model of learning that inculcates interest and independence in learning.

This research exhibited that collaboration among peers inculcates independence. Integrating day-to-day activities in learning may be a creative model of teaching and learning differently from the relatively superficial methods that have been used in the past. Social gatherings and virtual or online communities present supportive learning opportunities for LCTL learners.
References


*Center for Public Education, National School Boards Association.* Alexandria, VA.


doi:10.1093/elt/54.2.109


Devers, K. J. (1999). How will we know" good" qualitative research when we see it? Beginning the dialogue in health services research. *Health services research,* 34(5 Pt 2), 1153.


Egbert, J. L. (2005). Conducting research on CALL. *CALL research perspectives, 3-8.*


Thanasoulas, D. (2000). What is learner autonomy and how can it be fostered?. The Internet TESL Journal, 6(11), 1-12.


Appendix A: IRB Approval

A determination has been made that the following research study meets the criteria for exemption under the following category(-ies):

2

Project Title: Learner Autonomy in Less Commonly Taught Languages (Swahili): A Phenomenological Study

Primary Investigator: Patrick Obwocha Mose

Co-Investigator(s):

Advisor: David Richard Moore
(IF applicable)

Department: Educational Studies

Robin Stack, CIP
Shelly Rex, BS

Office of Research Compliance Staff

The approval remains in effect provided the study is conducted exactly as described in your approved application. Any additions or modifications to the project must be reviewed and approved by the IRB (as an amendment) prior to implementation.

IRB approval does not supersede other regulatory requirements, such as HIPAA, FERPA, PPRA, etc.

Adverse events/unanticipated problems must be reported to the IRB promptly.
Appendix B: Consent Document

Ohio University Consent Form

**Title of Research:** Learner Autonomy in Less Commonly Taught Languages (Swahili): A Phenomenological Study

**Researcher:** Patrick Mose

You are being asked to participate in research. For you to be able to decide whether you want to participate in this study, you should understand what the study is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will allow your participation in this study. You should receive a copy of this document to take with you.

**Explanation of Study**

This study is being done because I like to determine the role of instructors and students in fostering learner autonomy in less commonly taught languages.

If you agree to participate, the researcher will interview you. The interview will take be between forty-five minutes to one and a half hour long. The researcher will audio-record you and take notes during the interview.

You should not participate in this study if you are not an instructor or a student of any less commonly taught language in the university.

Your participation in the study will last for one and a half hour.

**Risks and Discomforts**

No risks or discomforts are anticipated

**Benefits**

This study is important to science/society because it will guide instructional designers, instructors, students, and other interested educational stakeholders to choose learning resources and strategies that foster learner autonomy in language-learning. Individually, you may benefit by understanding your role as an instructor or student in
the use of technology may promote learner autonomy in less commonly taught languages.

Confidentiality and Records

Your study information will be kept confidential by keeping any audio recordings, interviews, or material in a locked location accessible only by the researcher and on a password protected site. Data will be destroyed by 5/1/2017.

Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared with:

* Federal agencies, for example the Office of Human Research Protections, whose responsibility is to protect human subjects in research;
* Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at OU;

Contact Information

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact Patrick Mose pm261309@ohio.edu (740) 331-0905, advisor: Dr. David Moore moored3@ohio.edu (740) 597-1322.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Chris Hayhow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740) 593-0664 or hayhow@ohio.edu.

By signing below, you are agreeing that:

- you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered;
- you have been informed of potential risks and they have been explained to your satisfaction;
- you understand Ohio University has no funds set aside for any injuries you might receive as a result of participating in this study;
- you are 18 years of age or older;
- your participation in this research is completely voluntary; you may leave the study at any time; if you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Signature __________________ Date _______________________

Printed Name___________________________________________
Appendix C: Email Invitation to Participate in the interview

Instructional Technology
Educational Studies
The Patton College of Education
Athens, OH 45701

Date………………..

Dear Participant,

I am a Doctoral Student in Instructional Technology Program at Ohio University Patton College of Education in Athens, Ohio. Completion of a dissertation is part of the requirement for this degree. In lieu of this, I am conducting a study that focuses on learner autonomy in less commonly taught languages technology at Ohio University College of Arts and Sciences.

Your participation is very important to successfully conduct this study. Recommendations and conclusion of this study will be based on your response. Participants in this study will be asked to respond to questions on demographic and academic information, learning strategies and technology experience in relation to autonomy. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw your consent at any time. The data you provide will be confidential. All data will be analyzed and reported in aggregate form.

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Patrick Mose
Appendix D: Letters Seeking Permission to Use Copyrighted Materials

July 27, 2015

Instructional Technology
Educational Studies
The Patton College of Education
Athens, OH 45701

Dear Professor Littlewood,

My name is Patrick Mose a doctoral candidate at Ohio University, Athens, U.S. I am emailing you to seek your permission to use your “Framework for Developing Autonomy in Foreign Language-learning”. I am conducting a phenomenological study on learner autonomy in Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTLs). Your work is very relevant to my study and I would love to incorporate it in my literature with your consent. Thank you in advance for your kind consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Patrick Mose
Dear Patrick Mose,

Yes, by all means! I'm glad if it will be helpful.

Sorry to reply so late. I work only part time at HKBU now and don't check the 'official' email often while I'm away (as I am now). The email I use regularly is in the cc line.

Best wishes,

Bill Littlewood
Appendix F: Instructors Interview Protocol

1st Interview

1. Introduction to the interview: Thanking the research participant for coming. Complete consent form.

2. Building rapport before interview.
   a. Talk about consent and confidentiality.
   b. Confirm interview end time
   c. Review the purpose and procedures of the interview

3. Tell me about your background.
   Probes:
   a. Where you schooled
   b. What are your interest?

4. How did you come to this program?
   Probes:
   a. What motivated you to choose the program?
   b. Why did you choose this college?
   c. How did you know about the existence of the program?
   d. Did you know anyone in the program?

5. How did you become interested in LCTLs?
   Probes:
   a. What other languages have you learned?
   b. What considerations did you take in order to join the program?
6. How do you study languages?
   Probes:
   a. What tools do you use to learn?
   b. Do you study with other people or alone?
   c. How do you assess your learning progress?

2nd Interview

1. Introduction to the interview: Thanking the research participant for coming.
2. Talk about consent and confidentiality and confirm interview end time.
3. Review the purpose and procedures of the interview.
   a. The purpose of the interview is…
4. How do you describe learner autonomy?
5. How would you describe your LCTL teaching experience in the U.S.?
   Probes:
   a. Any differences between U.S. and other countries?
   b. Positive or negative?
   c. Any challenges encountered when teaching LCTLs in the U.S.?
6. What strategies/techniques do you use to promote learner autonomy in LCTLs classroom?
7. How does the learners recognize the use of these strategies?
8. Could you describe some examples of learner autonomy experiences you have encountered in a LCTL context?
9. What situations have typically influenced (or affected) your experiences about learner autonomy?

10. What do you think are the factors that influence learner autonomy?

11. How would you describe your role in promoting autonomous learning in Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTLs)?

12. How do you assess whether the learners are autonomous?

13. Do you have anything you wish to add before we end the interview?

Thank you very much for your invaluable time and input.

3rd Interview

Member checking

Going back to the participant to check with them on the results. Two stage member checks will be conducted: first, reading the transcripts of their interview dialogues. Second, asking them to verify the researchers’ emerging themes and inferences formed from the interview.
Appendix G: Students Interview Protocol

1st Interview

1. Introduction to the interview: Thanking the research participant for coming.

   Complete consent form.

2. Building rapport before interview.

   a. Talk about consent and confidentiality.
   
   b. Confirm interview end time
   
   c. Review the purpose and procedures of the interview

3. Tell me about your background.

   Probes:

   a. Where you schooled
   
   b. What are your interests?

4. How did you come to this program?

   Probes:

   a. What motivated you to choose the program?
   
   b. Why did you choose this college?
   
   c. How did you know about the existence of the program?
   
   d. Did you know anyone in the program?

5. How did you become interested in LCTLs?

   Probes:

   a. What other languages have you learned?
   
   b. What considerations did you take in order to join the program?
6. How do you study languages?

Probes:

a. What tools do you use to learn?

b. Do you study with other people or alone?

c. How do you assess your learning progress?

2nd Interview

1. How do you describe learner autonomy?

2. How would you describe your LCTL learning experience?

3. What strategies did you use to promote your learning autonomy in LCTL classroom?

4. How does the learners recognize the use of these strategies?

5. Could you describe some examples of experiences you have encountered in learning Swahili autonomously?

6. What situations have affected your experiences about learner autonomy?

7. What do you think are the factors that influence learner autonomy?

8. How have you assessed whether you are an autonomous learner?

9. Do you have anything you wish to add before we end the interview?

Thank you very much for your invaluable time and input.

3rd Interview

Member checking. Going back to the participant to check with them on the results. Two stage member checks will be conducted: first, reading the transcripts of their interview
dialogues. Second, asking them to verify the researchers’ emerging themes and inferences formed from the interview.
### Appendix H: Final Identification of the Invariant Constituents and Themes

#### Theme – Learner Autonomy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Participant</th>
<th>Invariant Constituent/Exemplar Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Jasiri**            | **Reference 1:** I think learner autonomy is an aspect of learning where the learner has the capability to decide what they want to learn and they know how they can do that and they can get all the information they need by themselves. That means that they can have access to different resources be it technology or human resources to take care of their studies and you know they can plan on what they want to study.  
                                                                 **Reference 2:** I think that students don't always learn the way we want them to learn, they have their own ways of learning, and teachers need to know that I think that's not an option. |
| **Zakia**             | So you could tell that they were very motivated. They wanted to know almost every piece and bit of it. So, their level of motivation was so high. |
| **Haki**              | You are talking about some of the things that the language learner can be empowered to do on their own when they are learning the language. So that they not only have to rely on the teacher to tell them what to do. |
| **Latifah**           | I will describe Learner Autonomy as giving Learner's an opportunity to express themselves maybe during instruction because autonomy here would mean that Learner's are given more chances to speak what they think and to express themselves and it is a oppose to the kind of teaching we have, a teacher would basically give a lecture, like Learner autonomy is the opposite of an instructor just lecturing to the students while they do the listening. |
| **Hazina**            | **Reference 1:** That in itself it’s a way of encourage students to take charge of their own learning.  
                                                                 **Reference 2:** With that I discovered that I needed to free myself and let students know that there’s a point at which they can do stuff on their own. That was one of the reasons why I decided, “Well, maybe I need to backtrack a little and let students do some of this work on their own because I can’t teach everything in class.  
                                                                 **Reference 3:** When I hear autonomy, I think of independence. A situation where even as an instructor, there's a level at which you allow students to work independently because really,
| **Almasi** | **Reference 1**: I think that as a teacher you might have a number of sort of requirements and tools available to students they should use to demonstrate knowledge of a process that they have learned and mastered something. However, like for instance, they might not need to use all of those tools or they might gravitate towards some or none at all or they might have a specific way in which they learn better or more comfortable learning, and I think that is one aspect of learner autonomy.  
**Reference 2**: I think learner autonomy is also about trusting peoples’ abilities to learn and trusting that you know that if you … that they have the ability to learn and apply what you have given them what they know, what you are supposed to show them that they can apply it and learn uh in a way that produces desired outcomes without having to follow particular structure all the time.  
**Reference 3**: And then also thinking that a learner wanting to learn something and taking it upon their own. For instance, I think that in the case of language or research taking it upon their own just means that you have gone beyond the classroom and wanting to go some place and wanting to study some place where a language is spoken for instance, because you know that you will be in a situation where the languages crucial to your learning or the learning is going to have to come about in order for you to in a particular context.  
**Reference 4**: And I think that is an aspect of learner autonomy because it is sort of the learner’s consciousness about their own process and desire for learning, yeah. |
| **Najma** | I think it's being able to learn on your own and not necessarily be like, "This is exactly how you have to do this. This is the only way," having your professor tell you, "This is the only way this is possible. This is the only way you can learn." It's being able to figure out what learning style works best for you and then utilize that to do your best in the class. |
| Adimu | If you are a learner, you're a student; you are studying something autonomy is like independence or like being on your own. I would describe learner autonomy to mean that your own agency, your own resource or setting up, relying on you own self to make it or to get the best of what you are learning. I mean that's how I think I would describe it. |
| Fatuma | **Reference 1:** I think of autonomy as independence. I think it's self determination, freedom. If I think about learner autonomy, it should be a classroom or a learning experience that is very student-centered, and where the student determines the pace and the path and the tools that they want to use to learn the language or learn whatever they're trying to learn. It should be in their own style.  
**Reference 2:** I think about multiple intelligence theory, and how there are some people who are very visual learners. I'm a very visual learner. I need to see things written down before I can remember them. There are people who are auditory learners; there are people who are kinesthetic learners; there are people who are social and emotional learners. I think about learner autonomy has to take all of those things into consideration. Who is this learner? What's the best way for them to grasp the information and to process it so that they remember and they can use it in whatever way that they need it? Is that how you're defining it?  
Reference 3: Okay, I am a novice and I need to learn this." I had to let go of the control in a situation. I think that comes up in any parent/child relationship, teacher/student relationship, where the learner is asserting their autonomy and independence and frustration, and the parent or the teacher is like, "No, it has to be this way," and there's a clash. I did experience that a few times. |

**Theme – Personal Interests and Creativity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Participant</th>
<th>Exemplar Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jasiri</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reference 1:</strong> I used to do some kind of blogging, I didn’t have a knowledge of website designing then but my expertise if I can call it that way was mostly on computer hardware my expertise if I can call it the way was mostly on computer hardware, software installation, system troubleshooting and I did a lot of things when I was doing my undergraduate. I trained myself, I bought some computer books and started like</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
what computers all about I just liked to with electronics not with computers only. But I liked to even open mobile phones and trying to see what is made of the hardware part. So, I didn’t do any course in electronics but I had that love for computers and other electronic devices as well.

Reference 2: But I create some exercises that learners can find individual, independent ways, different ways, and diverse ways of dealing with that. Like I give them a tool that they can manipulate in different ways...and they customize that in a way that can fit their learning preferences.

Reference 3: As a teacher I have tried to create some materials maybe not to share them online but at least sharing them with my students. I said I mentioned initially that I do sing, I have recorded some short songs which can be used for language-learning, I have created some videos which can be used for language-learning, I have created also and working on the iBook project that was kind like trying to solve that problem to create something that can work as a student teacher, as a teacher to the student like could use that and go with it and learn and find the resources they want from in there. I have participated in a lot of other things trying to assist to find a way that I could assist students in classrooms and out of classrooms when I am around and when am not around. That’s what I have done so far.

Zakia

Reference 1: I had selected Bachelor of Language and Literary studies at Moi University because I was motivated to make that selection is because I was performing well in Swahili mostly and it was my last selection but guess what? That was what I was admitted to pursue at Moi University. You know how people value or view Swahili in Kenya, so many people will tell you its not going to help you, that’s a wastage of time and parents money.

Reference 2: When we looked at different foods and drinks. She told me from the word go, you know I love cooking, cooking is my hobby so when we got to that topic guess what…

Reference 3: So, that you can try to incorporate all their interest instead of teaching what you think is relevant to them. "It's not about you, its about them"

Haki

Reference 1: What I can say most of all, the most important thing about learning a language is the motivation, personal interest that’s it! If you have the positive attitude towards a language. You can do anything and then you have the environment that is going to help you learn that language and
people who are going to support you, to explain a few things that’s all it will take for you to learn a language.

**Reference 2:** But I think there are different ways in which the language teachers themselves should be the ones identifying what they want to do with technology and then work with technology people to see how they can work together. It is not like always the teachers being told we are teaching you how to do this.

**Reference 3:** I have my own materials that I have developed over the years. I do use a lot of slides for instance, uh uh I do use Blackboard a lot so what I do is this, uh the material is organized in weeks so every has got a folder. I posted them as early as at the beginning of the semester.

**Reference 4:** As a teacher I have tried to create some materials maybe not to share them online but at least sharing them with my students. I said I mentioned initially that I do sing, I have recorded some short songs which can be used for language-learning, I have created some videos which can be used for language-learning, I have created also and working on the iBook project that was kind like trying to solve that problem to create something that can work as a student teacher, as a teacher to the student like could use that and go with it and learn and find the resources they want from in there. I have participated in a lot of other things trying to assist to find a way that I could assist students in classrooms and out of classrooms when I am around and when am not around. That’s what I have done so far.

| Latifah | **Reference 1:** For instance, there was a student who did a presentation on the climate of East Africa and he talked about the, generally life in Malawi and it was quite interesting because the student mentioned that the types of food people in Malawi eat and the kind of, their culture and their weather patterns and it was quite interesting because I actually didn't understand Malawi that much but I think I learned from the student.  
**Reference 2:** Which topic do you think you would like most that you can talk about with your fellow students in class and so the students give their suggestions and we listed them down and then each student was asked to pick the best suggestion, the best topic they would like to present on and that is how the students prepared their presentation. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hazina</strong></td>
<td>Why the interest in Swahili, let me go back to my O level. I would say even from primary school that was my most loved subject. When I went to high school, I just found myself</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
interested in Swahili language. Especially in Swahili and literature. Actually, at O level, Swahili was my best performed subject. I had the highest points in Swahili, of course, followed by Literature, Swahili and the other subjects.

**Almasi**

**Reference 1:** So I am interested in where specific people live. So, it can be a region or a continent. I am interested primarily in like studying Sub-Saharan Africa and also interested in looking at the Caribbean, South America particularly people of color that live in these places.

**Reference 2:** First of all, when you are in America, Kenya is very accessible through the media; because if nothing else we get plenty of images of Maasai and Samburu and people call them all as Maasai right? So, those are some of the very first images that you get to see when you associate Africa with Africa. You either see these images or you see the famine images Ethiopia and Somali. So, you have this thing, you have this joy and you have that sort of media joy of like the Kenya side the East African person that they play basketball and they run. So, those things also contributed to interest in Kenya specifically, just this curiosity and of course they always promote this idea of nature, you know in East Africa going on safaris you know and going to Tanzania and the Serengeti and all these other place right? Those things become an interest, out of ignorance and if you appreciate those sort things and you want to see those things you know it is in Kenya. But then as I, I have always wanted to go there. Just learning my history like I said before just added to like I had more knowledge to a lot of things but having the knowledge and reading it in a book and understanding certain things and experience was a part. What really ah introduced me to certain aspects of Kenyan culture more so like the music, and the foods and the different ethnic groups was living in Namibia and meeting and then living with, and then starting a business some Kenyan people. So, from that it just evolved (clapping in confirmation) I had to go to Kenya because my best friend were Kenyans I named my son Macharia, you know as his middle name in his birth certificate.

**Reference 3:** And so, you know, listening to like Genge music and all other stuff it just become natural for me that having never set my foot there I knew certain things that really fascinated me and attracted me and I had to go. Living in Namibia with Kenyan people I will hear Kiswahili spoken and never really thought twice about wanting to seriously actually learning the language because you didn’t have to in Namibia
and no would even take time to even want to teach you.  
**Reference 4:** I started to take Kiswahili in school formally and started to learn more about the language and its spread and transfer and the dynamic of Kiswahili in the continent I became more interested in learning about specifically Kiswahili in the DRC because its very different everywhere you go.  
**Reference 5:** What I seen on my own is that, there has to be some investment, like you have to be really interested and invested in it or moved by wanting to know this language either for the sake of you wanting to know the language or needing to know the language or there is something else motivating you. And so for me, for Kiswahili that has been the case.  

| **Najma** | At that time, I knew nothing about African culture because am from a small rural town, and you kind of get stuck in the kind of culture that you were used to know. Exposed to new kind of things, I was like it is great to learn something new so that why I took Swahili in the first place. And then I just got captivated by like Kenyan and Tanzanian cultures, and so I took classes. |
| **Adimu** | I have a background on radio, so I saw job opening at the UN radio and I looked at it and I qualified but then they said they wanted someone who spoke Swahili, I said I am studying Swahili man. so obviously your marketability improves and then you also get to speak another language and it makes you a better person. |
| **Fatuma** | **Reference 1:** I started studying Arabic later. I got another FLAS fellowship when I started my PhD, and I started studying Arabic, because I wanted to understand the Arabic roots of Swahili.  
**Reference 2:** I do think that the language was so crucial to the work I did, and I think about some of the women and the children that I worked with, they didn't speak English. There's no way that we could have connected, or understood each other, if I hadn't learned that language.  
**Reference 3:** I also talked about, having advanced Swahili skills made it possible for me to do independent research without an interpreter. This is a big thing. Not that I don't trust interpreters, but just having that ability to build rapport with people, to gain their trust, to lessen the distance of being an outsider mzungu. I said, speaking the local language disarms people. It makes you more accessible and able to understand what's going on. You can communicate directly with someone. |
without a third party.

**Reference 4:** Experience. To me that's what learner autonomy is really about, is being able to use the language in real life on your own terms. That's how students will be able to gain some fluency in the language.

### Theme – Motivation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research</th>
<th>Exemplar Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Jasiri</em></td>
<td>Technology is something that sometimes people need to have some kind of motivation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| *Zakia* | **Reference 1:** My worldview my attitude towards Swahili and promised us that if we could stick they could make sure that they arranged for an exchange program for us in German and that’s how my journey started. And then he promised that if anyone could have worked hard enough to graduate with first honors they could make sure that you know, that person was retained. So I did my best, I majored in Swahili grammar and literature. Guess what? I go the first class!  
**Reference 2:** So you could tell that they were very motivated. They wanted to know almost every piece and bit of it. So, their level of motivation was so high, but when you are teaching it in college for instance Ohio University some of our students you might have realized happen to be in Swahili classes because it was a requirement, they just wanted to fulfill foreign language requirement.  
**Reference 3:** …about Africa... and she was reading it like you know...she didn't have any other class during that summer sessions apart from Swahili so she had a lot of time. She was reading it like, I don't want to like a Bible (Laughter) but like a manual, you know... to learning Swahili and every time she will ask you a question about something she read. Yeah, that was one thing, and then her level of motivation really got elevated. When we looked at different foods and drinks. She told me from the word go, you know I love cooking, cooking is my hobby so when we got to that topic guess what? |
| *Haki* | **Reference 1:** What I can say most of all, the most important thing about learning a language is the motivation, personal interest that’s it! If you have the positive attitude towards a language. You can do anything and then you have the |
environment that is going to help you learn that language and people who are going to support you, to explain a few things that’s all it will take for you to learn a language.

Reference 2: Right, he was so enthusiastic about teaching German and the fact that we got all the resources and materials from school, the text books that we had, at school we had a language center, let’s call it like a language lab though it is not like very much equipped like what we have here. And by then the computers were not available but we had this. Starehe we had a lot of people who had done German

Latifah

If I had a way of encouraging students to be more willing to be more willing to practice using Swahili it would be so good because sometimes I do teach my students but they know the rules they can understand but they don’t speak out so if I had a way of encouraging students to be more active in class to participate maybe I would be, I would feel better.

Hazina

Whatever it is with your group decide what you’re going to do. Create something whether it’s a conversation or a skit or whatever and then come back and present in class. In that way they work on their own. In many cases when you give them that feeling that they’re in charge, they do a good job.

Almasi

Reference 1: So, I gotta go, so I am tired of only knowing certain words like ‘MAMBO’ vipi? like you know every little bit basic that everybody knows Like ‘nakupenda’ that the only thing you know. After being totally fade up with not understanding what my friends were talking about sometimes when they get together it was just like I am going to learn. Yeah, and then enrolled and that was it.

Reference 2: Just coming into contact with the music and the dancing ah because my husband is a musician and he had a band and that’s how I met him, I was doing a documentary about these refugees and what they do and he was a refugee and so that’s how we met through this his band documenting it. So, it was only natural to me to learn more about him and Kiswahili as well. My husbands first language is not KiLingala, my husbands first language is Kiswahili. He grew up speaking that, he doesn’t even know is supposed ancestral mother tongue but he knows Kiswahili. Before he learned Lingala he spoke Kiswahili. Although emphasis placed on Congolese people Lingala, ah its just naturally came about that I will learn Kiswahili, because not only was I living with closest friends speaking Kiswahili now I had my closest friends and husband speaking together in Kiswahili. I had no idea what the hell anyone was saying.
| Reference 3: | What I seen on my own is that, there has to be some investment, like you have to be really interested and invested in it or moved by wanting to know this language either for the sake of you wanting to know the language or needing to know the language or there is something else motivating you. And so for me, for Kiswahili that has been the case. |
| Reference 4: | In informal sense I had a great time speaking Swahili and I will say that like I need to get back there, I’m dying to get back there, am dying dying to be in a situation that I have to speak Swahili because only in those instance do I truly find that learning is taking place where I’m actually building on the language that I know, building on what I know. Using what I know, and building on what I know. |
| **Najma** | At that time, I knew nothing about African culture because am from a small rural town, and you kind of get stuck in the kind of culture that you were used to know. Exposed to new kind of things, I was like it is great to learn something new so that why I took Swahili in the first place. And then I just got captivated by like Kenyan and Tanzanian cultures, and so I took classes |
| **Adimu** | Reference 1: I come from Ghana, West Africa and Swahili is widely spoken in the continent mainly in the eastern parts, somewhere other parts of the continent, I thought it was a very good opportunity that I should seize, so that's why, and also my friends where speaking it, everywhere you go Swahili. It was opportunity I had to take care of. Reference 2: I have a background on radio, so I saw job opening at the UN radio and I looked at it and I qualified but then they said they wanted someone who spoke Swahili, I said I am studying Swahili man. so obviously your marketability improves and then you also get to speak another language and it makes you a better person |
| **Fatuma** | Reference 1: My teacher, she ... When I gave the presentation, she took the necklace off of her neck and put it on me, and was like, "You are the most fluent person from this program that I've ever met," and she was so happy that I had done that, because she's like, "You really got the intent of this program," which was really to immerse yourself here, and get to know the people that you're working with and living with. Reference 2: That's how I got into Swahili, and I love the language so much, I even gave my daughter a Swahili name. I just really took it on as my second language, and I've studied a
lot of languages. I studied French, Latin, Russian, and Spanish, and then Swahili and Arabic, but Swahili is the only one that I really followed for years, and have really used in my life.

**Reference 3:** My professor, Tom Wolf, was really inspiring to me, because he was like that. He could joke around with people. He was so fluent in Swahili. I just loved watching him interacting with his students, or his colleagues, and he would make these jokes, and everybody would laugh. They were just like, "He's one of us." He's made Kenya his home. I was like, "I want to be like that," and it was helpful to have a role model, and to see that it was possible. I think he really inspired me.

Reference 4: I love that. When people say, wewe ni wetu, that makes my heart sing. I've had so many people say that to me, and that's what makes me feel really motivated to keep it up. Showing that commitment and that passion helps me to have a community of people that I love to be around. I think it's hard being here in Athens. We are so isolated. There aren't very many of us who speak Swahili. When we do get together it's really fun and exciting. I'd like to make that happen more. In fact, when I came back from Kenya I used to organize that coffee hour, and that's how I met you.

### Theme – Personal Mentorship and Role Modelling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Participant</th>
<th>Exemplar Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jasiri</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reference 1:</strong> For the first time I was so much inspired I would say that Dr. Kessler in those courses inspired me, he planted this seed in me, it was something that I could honestly do. So I worked, I took those courses to do with Computer Assisted Language-learning and after that there was nothing else I was thinking about apart from Instructional Technology a program that was being offered at the university here. <strong>Reference 2:</strong> As a teacher you tell the students you see you can have this and this is going to be for your future and they get motivated, they learn a lot from you...they get beyond what they expected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zakia</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reference 1:</strong> ...he said that he is the person taking us in that course and it changed everything regarding my view towards Swahili. He had just come back from German to pursue his</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PhD program in linguistics and he had been a professor of Swahili and then he changed my worldview my attitude towards Swahili and promised us that if we could stick they could make sure that they arranged for an exchange program for us in German and that’s how my journey started. And then he promised that if anyone could have worked hard enough to graduate with first honors they could make sure that you know, that person was retained. So I did my best, I majored in Swahili grammar and literature.

**Reference 2:** Oh my gosh! I think I can say he has influenced my career ever since I stepped my legs here. To begin with, I didn’t have an apartment so I stayed with him for one week and then I was late for my orientation and so he was the one showing me around campus, and then he was my academic advisor so he was following up everything that I was doing and he was advising me what courses to take. Of course in linguistics is easy because you know you are supposed to take certain courses at every given time so there is no time you can fail to register or over-register. But I think uh I might be the first student in our cohort to attend a conference and it was because of him.

**Reference 3:** Oh! I remember when I was working for the university of Oregon, the professor in charge there told us that the way you treat your students would be the products of how you treat them. If you want them to be passive students, they are going to be passive. If you want them to be active students, they are going to be active. So, its up to you to decide what kind students you want.

---

**Haki**

**Reference 1:** What I was thinking then was maybe I have to drop Swahili because I liked all my subjects so I had to think I had to drop one, so which one? But after consulting with especially professor Kimani Njogu.

**Reference 2:** Oh yeah! obviously if we are talking about big names in Swahili in Kenya or probably talk about Swahili scholarship in general Prof Kimani ranks up there and of course that time he was the national chairman of Chama cha Kiswahili, he knows there were opportunities. He knew even in Kenya itself we don’t have many people who are experts in Kiswahili.

**Reference 3:** Right, he was so enthusiastic about teaching German and the fact that we got all the resources and materials from school, the text books that we had, at school we had a language center, let’s call it like a language lab though it is not like very much equipped like what we have here. And by then
the computers were not available but we had this. Starehe we had a lot of people who had done German.

**Reference 4:** Prof Kimani ranks up there and of course that time he was the national chairman of Chama cha Kiswahili, he knows there were opportunities. He knew even in Kenya itself we don’t have many people who are experts in Kiswahili. People might use Swahili but when you come to the expertise people, they are not that many. by the way, even in Tanzania itself if you come to the level, people might speak Swahili very well but in terms of the expertise of people who know not only to speak but also even the structure and everything all the background surrounding Swahili.

**Latifah**

Yeah!! So, after Professor Mutiti introduced me to Dr. Githinji and Dr. Oshita I was able to communicate with them and Dr. Githinji introduced me to two Kenyan students who had also gone through the program and one of them is Patrick Mose the one am talking to right now and Peter Nderitu, so I was able to talk to them and they really helped me in preparing to come to the U.S. they gave me almost all the details I needed for preparation and they also welcomed me to the U.S. very warmly and I was able to settle down so quickly and feel at home.

**Hazina**

From time to time, I invited Swahili speakers to come and just practice speaking with the students. For example; I invited the … She’s the assistant director for Global Studies. She’s an administrator but she has a very good understanding of Swahili. She helped me from time to time to either teaching a particular topic or just coming to talk to the students about Swahili and Swahili culture. Because she herself did her research in Kenya and she stayed at the Coast for a long period of time. She has a good grasp of the culture. She was a good resource for me. The other people that I invited to class were Swahili speakers from East Africa mainly Kenya. I would just have someone pop into class and converse with the students.

**Almasi**

**Reference 1:** I credit 150% my formal experience, and my initial formal experience with a specific professor and the way he taught. Mm, I think it help me feel very confident and confident and positive about speaking, and learning and reading and writing in Kiswahili and so I have to credit the formal because I think that was my foundation. If I didn’t have that there is no, I cannot I wouldn’t and so I credit like the techniques maybe that the professor used and I can say specific to this professor because I have been taught Kiswahili
formally but through three different individuals and they all do things differently; so my first experience with that first person the professor it really set the tone with my ability and I think the confidence is really very important just to be confident and comfortable and just being able to make connections with the language.

**Reference 2:** Once you get into that kind of rhythm, it just becomes so much better. I was so much happier when I just…and it came to a point when my husband’s sister was just like “Do you know that you are speaking Kiswahili now a lot more like somebody that is from here?” I didn’t realize it but I think its because you have to just pick up like what everybody else is doing it is like it is what it is.

**Najma**

I didn’t have that problem too much because I think that once I told people I was a student they were like I should definitely speak to you in Swahili now. And they were more willing to help me out than they were trying to speak English. One thing that I ran into though was a lot of people wanted me to teach them like different American dances, very popular music, and that was really one of the thing I ran into other than people wanting to speak English with me.

**Adimu**

While studying African studies I also took some classes from the Scripps College of Communication and then when the time was up I applied and they looked up my background. I had done active journalism for like ten solid years, so they looked up my background they thought I am qualified. I wasn't going go else where, I was used to this environment, I knew the professors, I knew the town and the people. I had built a support system in my educational structure so why not take advantage of it.

**Fatuma**

**Reference 1:** That's great. I saw Pope John Paul the second in Nairobi when he visited. He conducted part of that mass speaking in Swahili. I was so impressed by that, because I'm like, he must be so fluent in so many different languages, and for him to take the time to learn how to say some things in Swahili showed some commitment to that place.

**Reference 2:** My professor, Tom Wolf, was really inspiring to me, because he was like that. He could joke around with people. He was so fluent in Swahili. I just loved watching him interacting with his students, or his colleagues, and he would make these jokes, and everybody would laugh. They were just like, "He's one of us." He's made Kenya his home. I was like, "I want to be like that," and it was helpful to have a role model, and to see that it was possible. I think he really inspired
Reference 3: Usually I feel like my ... I guess I'm a social person, so usually I assessed my progress by how other people responded to me. If they were really encouraging and being like, "Oh, you're really fluent," or, "Your accent is really nice." A lot of people would comment on my accent, and I would feel really proud of that, and really happy that people gave me that feedback.

Reference 4: once I got my PhD, like my first teacher did. She was an American who had studied Swahili, and she became a teacher. I thought maybe I could be like her.

Reference 5: She's amazing. She's super fluent, and she's a linguist, she's a linguistic anthropologist. She's another person I'm like, "I want to be Katrina when I grow up." She is very fluent, and she's not a native speaker. Christina Higgins is another one. She's at Hawaii now, but she was on my Swahili GPA program, and she was a PhD student in linguistics. She's a white American chick like me, but she really learned Swahili, and now she's teaching it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme – Authentic Language-learning Experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Haki</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hazina</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
giving them the opportunity to use the language that they have
done independently to create something that is relevant to
them and to their own lives.

**Reference 3:** I identify the websites right at the beginning of
the semester and I give them an assignment, go ... We have
been talking about food, refer to this particular website, this
link, there's a game there, play it. Sometimes we can do that in
class, sometimes they do that on their own. The other thing I
try to do is to encourage them to have conversation partners. It
really hasn't worked very well for me, especially because I
have taught elementary levels and they are always so shy to
speak.

**Reference 4:** From time to time, I invited Swahili speakers to
come and just practice speaking with the students. For
example; I invited the ... She’s the assistant director for
Global Studies. She’s an administrator but she has a very good
understanding of Swahili. She helped me from time to time to
either teaching a particular topic or just coming to talk to the
students about Swahili and Swahili culture. Because she
herself did her research in Kenya and she stayed at the Coast
for a long period of time. She has a good grasp of the culture.
She was a good resource for me. The other people that I
invited to class were Swahili speakers from East Africa mainly
Kenya. I would just have someone pop into class and converse
with the students.

**Reference 5:** Some master’s students that I taught a while
back. They got a very good grasp of Swahili. I remember also
inviting one of them to my classroom to just come and talk to
the students about how to learn Swahili. Because he himself
had that experience and he seemed to have enjoyed his
experience and he had done well. I invited him to just show
the students on language-learning skills and what methods
they could use to help improve their learning of Swahili

**Reference 6:** My responsibility has shifted from being the sole
source of knowledge to a situation where I am a co-creator of
knowledge to the students. My students are I want to say
unequal but I see my job more as facilitating than teaching
which is what I did in Kenya

| Jasiri  | **Reference 1:** I haven’t really attempted to learn a language in
a formal way apart from just meeting friends and asking them |
how they say hi in their languages or just having an interest. Of course I have an interest in all African languages, if I had an opportunity to speak all of them I would want to.

Reference 2: I like using I like to teach using what we call communicative approach in classrooms... where language-learning focuses on context and you bring these real-life situations for the learning of language. This is different from the traditional approach that does a lot of grammar translations like giving students the grammar of the target language and comparing that grammar with the first language as the students.

Reference 3: If you create a friendly environment they will tell you for sure that I think this works very good for me, I like this. They will tell you I don't think I like this one but because as teachers we are also learning, we are learning how to teach every time we teach in classrooms.

Latifah

Reference 1: At some point I discussed with them, we came up with some topics about the Swahili culture and specifically there were topics on food, clothing, the events that, the people in the Swahili will do and so the students were to prepare lessons on these topics and they were to present in class and basically teach their fellow students.

Reference 2: Resource persons. Yes, I have invited a few people to my class here in the US. My fellow Swahili speakers to talk to my students and also leading the lessons, but back in Kenya the resources that were used would be maybe real things. Like if you are teaching vocabulary, you would carry related items to class. If you, someone was to, if you are talking about a topic on culture for certain community, you would invite a resource person again.

Reference 3: I think it is even better when the context is informal because the students, their classroom environment is usually tense and formal and students may feel that teacher to student relationship, the gap maybe so wide but if it is done in an informal environment, the students would be more free to speak. That is from my personal experience. Yeah, I would be more free with my teacher outside class than in class.

Zakia

Reference 1: …they mostly focused on teaching it context, everything has to be in context.

Reference 2: For the first time I found myself making Pillau for them...because she insisted, "I want to learn!" And you could see you know...each time we cooked something because
we cooked at her place on three different occasions, she would write to her parents "we are cooking this am gonna...eh I have the recipe with me so, when I come to Rhode Island after the sessions, am gonna make this for you!" You could just see that level of motivation or autonomy. Then the final point...I don't know why, I think am going to focus mostly on her because I have never seen such kind of motivation.

Reference 3: And also, both of them were committed or very committed I think Catholics, because each time they will tell me I went to church last night after our class at 5pm, so I taught them so many Swahili Christian songs

Reference 4: ...for instance uh you bring something that is culturally authentic, that is something that is so Kenyan, or so East African, that motivates them a lot. I teach them a dance, teach them to cook a traditional meal, teach them and let them demonstrate how to welcome a visitor the Kenyan or the East African way.

Reference 5: Connect them with other Swahili speakers, for instance, on our last day, at the university of Virginia, we met the professor who was in charge of the Swahili department, although the only student from the University of Virginia was going to continue with Swahili because of her military classes but nursing you know just wanted to make sure that they met so that in case of anything, if there was a Swahili function taking place on campus she can be invited you know that would keep her motivated to learn.

Reference 1: I mean we would meet each other and he would greet me in Swahili in the early days of it, thinking that everyone from Africa speaks Swahili. They ... "karibu," I say, "What does karibu mean?" and I say why I need to study this and it sounded good to me, and sometimes I go to class if I can't catch something I would see him and he would explain to me or I would see Kaka and then I say, "Mzee what does this mean?" and then even sometimes when you are speaking in English they would just speak some Swahili phrase forcing you to study it and be on top of it. Yeah, trying to help with some phrases and some simple phrases and things like that.

Reference 2: I mean of course a part from class room, I speak to people who speak the main language and I am not shy, I just speak it if I am wrong, I am wrong they correct me, so that is how I speak it.

Reference 3: There are two things in studying Swahili in a
Swahili speaking country that's different. When you go home it is Swahili, on the bus it is Swahili, in the market it is Swahili, in the office it's Swahili. You're likely to catch up more.

**Fatuma**

**Reference 1:** I went to Kenya for six months, and as part of that program we studied Swahili informally and formally. We went to a language school outside of Nairobi called Hekima Language Services. The University of Nairobi was actually closed at the time. This was in '94 to '95, so the students were on strike. This was in the days of Moi. The university was closed down, so we kind of had an independent traveling program. We would go and stay with families on home stays in different parts of the country, and then we would have some formal instruction sometimes, and then we'd move on.

**Reference 2:** I lived with a family ... First, I went to Narok, with a Maasai, Kikuyu mixed family, and then I stayed in Taita with another family, and then I went to Mombasa and Lamu, and I had a conversation partner in Lamu who was a Swahili Muslim woman. I spent a lot of time with her family. That was kind of how we were introduced to Swahili, was interacting with people, and our director, Tom Wolf, was an American guy who had been in the Peach Corps in Taita, and he had stayed in Kenya, and had become a really prominent university professor, had all these college students that he was working with, and they became our mentors and our peer mentors, or our buddies.

**Reference 3:** Again, I was kind of immersed in this community of people, and I was living with families, and living in a school with some OU alumni, with Mjomba and his family. That was a great experience because I was living in the coast mostly. I lived in Nairobi too, but most of the time I was in the coast. As you know, the coast is the home of Swahili. It's like, people speak Kiswahili sanifu and it's like, all the time, that is the first language that is used in conversation. It really forced me to use the language, and I remember, when I came back, how much more fluent I was, after a year.

**Reference 4:** I think, too, working with children was the best thing for me, because children are so forgiving. They were learning English at the same time I was learning Swahili, and so it was a mutual learning experience. They just thought it was funny if I made a mistake. They wouldn't get offended. They're just like, "Ha-ha. She said the wrong thing." They just thought it was funny. They didn't get upset.
**Reference 5:** Cooking. I spent a lot of time cooking with people. I remember, that was one of the really fun things with my family in Tanzania. They loved to cook, and I was vegan at the time. Not even vegetarian, but vegan. I wouldn't even drink chai with milk, which now I'm like, "Why did I put them through that?" But we used to go to the market together, and I learned the names for Dalasini, and, oh, man, I can't even remember now. Limau, and all the things ... All the spices, and all the foods.

**Reference 6:** We studied Swahili plays and poetry. I lived with a host family. It was maulidi in Tanga when we went there, and so I went to the mosque, and we visited the grave of Shaaban bin Robert. We got to experience Swahili coastal cultures, but also the cultures in Arusha.

**Reference 7:** I felt very encouraged by that program, because my teachers all reflected to me ... I think there were 12 students in the program. My friend Acacia and I were from OU. We were more fluent even than the students from Yale. They were like, "You guys must have a really good Swahili program." I think part of it is we had both gone on the Kalamazoo College program in Kenya, and Tom Wolf was our director, so we'd both been through that experience of experiential learning of Swahili. Then we came here, and our teachers were from ... We had Mshombe who was from Kenya, and then who's from Tanzania. They were both excellent teachers.

**Reference 8:** It wasn't sitting in a classroom reading a textbook or Kamusi and conjugating sentences. I could do that, but ... that helped me get the foundation of the language, but I think really exploring and that free movement is really essential. The most impactful lessons I had were assignments to go on a scavenger hunt to the market, or go try to take a bus from here to there, just giving you a task that you have to complete. It's almost like the amazing race or something in Swahili. That would be a fun thing if you could do that for your students sometime, just have a scavenger hunt where they ...

---

**Almasi**

**Reference 1:** What really ah introduced me to certain aspects of Kenyan culture more so like the music, and the foods and the different ethnic groups was living in Namibia and meeting and then living with, and then starting a business some Kenyan people. So, from that it just evolved (clapping in confirmation) I had to go to Kenya because my best friend
were Kenyans I named my son Macharia, you know as his middle name in his birth certificate.

**Reference 2:** And so, you know, listening to like Genge music and all other stuff it just become natural for me that having never set my foot there I knew certain things that really fascinated me and attracted me and I had to go. Living in Namibia with Kenyan people I will hear Kiswahili spoken and never really thought twice about wanting to seriously actually learning the language because you didn’t have to in Namibia and no would even take time to even want to teach you.

**Reference 3:** Just coming into contact with the music and the dancing ah because my husband is a musician and he had a band and that’s how I met him, I was doing a documentary about these refugees and what they do and he was a refugee and so that’s how we met through this his band documenting it. So, it was only natural to me to learn more about him and Kiswahili as well. My husband’s first language is not KiLingala, my husbands first language is Kiswahili. He grew up speaking that, he doesn’t even know is supposed ancestral mother tongue but he knows Kiswahili. Before he learned Lingala he spoke Kiswahili. Although emphasis placed on Congolese people Lingala, ah its just naturally came about that I will learn Kiswahili, because not only was I living with closest friends speaking Kiswahili now I had my closest friends and husband speaking together in Kiswahili. I had no idea what the hell anyone was saying.

**Reference 4:** I learned how to bargain, I learned how to ask for things, I learned how to talk with people in the taxi, I learned how to like order food learn how to shop, greetings, respectful things, cultural things, music and a lot of times when I learned any language like I even have an idea about it, its first because of the music that I have listened to and I want to know what those words mean and then I tune to together.

**Reference 5:** I feel like if you don’t have this chance to speak with people in real context like outside the classroom, to be able to say you study Kiswahili is nice but like the only time I have been made to speak Kiswahili outside the classroom in a setting that I say that is real, in Kenya people wouldn’t speak to me in Kiswahili but in Congo when I was in Lubumbashi people speak to me in Kiswahili that that’s it.

**Reference 6:** So I had to sometimes go back into my dictionary, go back into my little booklets, Internet look for stuff up or just to say or look at the flash cards to build my vocabulary while I was there, and then that situation coupled
with the fact that I have to speak Kiswahili I would say that now am studying Kiswahili in my mind, I don’t know anyone else’s definition. But for I was like now I am studying yeah. 

Reference 7: I don’t know there it was like. I would say I would be resistant because often time when people spoke to me on their local Kiswahili and they would correct me and they would say it is this and I would say no…I am not wrong you are right also, but am not wrong. So we used to get to those debates like I am speaking this kind of Kiswahili and they will be like okay, you know so…but then it became easy to communicate with people in their own local Kiswahili language after I had just a while. Now classes don’t even matter.

Reference 8: Kiswahili is dynamic in Africa but I think in places like Namibia we don’t have Kiswahili speakers except like in refugee camps or like a few people who come wherever in East Africa. Its influential in the popular culture, because of my Kenyan friends living there and doing music and being a part of like a newer generation of music and stuff, they started saying ‘cheza ngoma’ every Namibian now is saying the same and other Kiswahili words is just now part of the lexicon. And so, that for me is very fascinating coz like am like you know yeah, they say it all the time. Even they will be like Manzee

Reference 9: So they will be just like this is great! And I will literary be saying that I learned from people by just having conversations with people with my broken language because they were just happy to speak with me. Which was such a difference from learning from other contexts because people just didn’t have the time was like I was a joke, or I will hit artificial kind of learning environment so you don’t get to really have conversation. Then after sometime after being in Congo I came to some place where I realized that “Damn!” Most time I have spoken Kiswahili here really the only time am speaking English is when am speaking to my son.

Reference 10: Most of my learning just took place just through listening and trying to make connections and trying to understand things that I heard and things that people said, and things that happened in other languages outside Swahili and making those connections.

Najma

Reference 1: Also really enjoyed going to the markets a lot because we studied in class like how much you should pay for things as well as my host family helped me out, so it was just really like some kind of fun. We tried to argue with people
because they tried to upcharge me and am just like uh I might be white but am not stupid.

**Reference 2:** I didn’t have that problem too much because I think that once I told people I was a student they were like I should definitely speak to you in Swahili now. And they were more willing to help me out than they were trying to speak English.

**Reference 3:** At that time, I knew nothing about African culture because am from a small rural town, and you kind of get stuck in the kind of culture that you were used to know. Exposed to new kind of things, I was like it is great to learn something new so that why I took Swahili in the first place. And then I just got captivated by like Kenyan and Tanzanian cultures, and so I took classes.

**Reference 4:** There's also just a lot of native speakers on campus so I would run into them a lot and speak to them as well. I found it to not be too difficult at all because there was a lot of opportunity here.

**Reference 5:** It's so much easier to learn when you're actually in the environment because you don't really have a choice. I liked that though. I like that it really pushed me to further my skills and actually be able to communicate with people. There would be some circumstances where I would have to go through two, three different words that mean similar things because I'd be talking to people who spoke different dialects so they wouldn't always quite understand what I was saying right off the bat. That really challenged me but I liked it.

**Reference 6:** There would be certain days of the week where they wouldn't let me speak English so that really helped me. The biggest thing was there was a lot ... I lived in a neighborhood where there was a lot of kids and it seemed that my host family's children were the most popular so different people's kids would come over a lot and they were kind of learning Swahili too so I would speak with them a lot and that really helped me because they weren't used to people who weren't speaking very proper Swahili so very quickly they would be like, "I don't think you're saying that right," or would just be very confused. That was probably the biggest thing that helped me with my grammar.

**Reference 7:** I feel like for the most part, while I did study on my own, I depended a lot on other people when it came to speaking because I think it's really difficult to try to teach yourself to speak to other people if you're not speaking to other people so I did rely on other people, specifically for
Reference 8: Yeah. I can't remember who's house we went to but the second year I think we went to one of the girls in my class's house and we spent the whole day cooking different things and eating food there and speaking in Swahili and that was really fun because that was the first time I tried east African food so that was cool. I've done a couple of speaking workshops, like I remember I did that with you first year and then I did something else like that with Filipo as well.

### Theme – Role of Interaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Participant</th>
<th>Exemplar Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Haki**             | Reference 1: We had time to even go for the coffee hour. If we asked the students to come at the coffee hour and interact it was good. And the we started the African Languages day, so there was all these new ways of people knowing that we had a Swahili program.  
Reference 2: We try to make the students interact amongst themselves you have to first of all give, you find that in the American culture. |
| **Hazina**           | Reference 1: The idea of conversation partner for me was to encourage them to have someone to speak with or to practice with outside the classroom. It really hasn't caught up outside the classroom but it's something that I am still trying to figure out how I can encourage students to feel proud to be conversing and to be practicing Swahili with each other.  
Reference 2: From time to time, I invited Swahili speakers to come and just practice speaking with the students. For example; I invited the … She’s the assistant director for Global Studies. She’s an administrator but she has a very good understanding of Swahili. She helped me from time to time to either teaching a particular topic or just coming to talk to the students about Swahili and Swahili culture. Because she herself did her research in Kenya and she stayed at the Coast for a long period of time. She has a good grasp of the culture. She was a good resource for me. The other people that I invited to class were Swahili speakers from East Africa mainly Kenya. I would just have someone pop into class and converse with the students.  
Reference 3: The other thing that I do is to encourage them to |
attend the Swahili conversation hour. This is voluntary for the students. It’s not like the classroom where they feel that they’re obligated to come. Just making that decision on their own that, “Yeah, I need to go and seek with other people to go and converse and improve on my speaking skills.” That in itself it’s a way of encourage students to take charge of their own learning.

**Jasiri**

**Reference 1:** So, sometimes I used to spend not as much as nowadays, but I used to spend a couple of years ago sometimes on the Internet how do you say hi in Zulu, how do you say this in this language, in Shona, so its more like that. I can say hi, hello to people from different languages; Akan, Somali, Arabic, Zulu but I am not really to converse a lot in those languages.

**Reference 2:** Well, I used friends, I use people who speak those languages and again as I said because I haven’t learnt a language in a formal way like doing assignments from teachers or things like.

**Reference 3:** Knowing a word in a language is totally different from using that language in a normal conversation or communication. So, the computer can tell me how to say hi in another language but I will need someone to practice that with. If I don’t have someone to practice that language with then its likely that I’m just gonna have that word in my mind but I might not be able to use it.

**Reference 4:** Like you need to have at least practiced that language not necessarily native speaker but someone who can speak the language so that you get some kind of feedback. Language is supposed to be interchangeable, like you give one word the other person responds and in most cases unless in some special computerized programs.

**Reference 5:** I like using I like to teach using what we call communicative approach in classrooms... where language-learning focuses on context and you bring these real-life situations for the learning of language. This is different from the traditional approach that does a lot of grammar translations like giving students the grammar of the target language and comparing that grammar with the first language as the students.

**Latifah**

**Reference 1:** So, one way of learning a language is listening to people speaking it, so you try to master the words and the pronunciation and then get to know what they mean so you
have to interact with the speakers maybe if they mention a word you have to try to say a word and then ask them wht it means and then master the meaning.

**Reference 2**: We also have conversation hours where I speak with my students, I try to make them speak up the Swahili they know so that if they make mistakes we can try to rectify. I have to do all to make them speak Swahili.

**Reference 3**: My students usually come for conversation hours. Sometimes with me, sometimes with a fellow teacher who usually goes to class with me. They would meet her and discuss, talk to her in Swahili what we call the conversation hour and it helps them develop their Swahili skills. We also do oral exams like midterm and yeah, so such kind of meetings were the students get to speak out their language they have learned already with the chance they could express themselves, yes.

---

**Zakia**

**Reference 1**: Trying to relate so yeah, so I can say at some point I extend those discussions in as much as I read them by myself whatever I read to my friends whenever we are having a social gathering yeah.

**Reference 2**: and now that added her motivation because you know her aunt didn't know anything about Swahili, she didn't know anything at all, so she took it upon herself to text her all the time...you can say this to the natives it means this and this is the likely response. They might end up giving you, so I think she learned a lot through interacting with her for the two weeks she was in Kenya.

---

**Adimu**

**Reference 1**: I mean of course a part from class room, I speak to people who speak the main language and I am not shy, I just speak it if I am wrong, I am wrong they correct me, so that is how I speak it.

**Reference 2**: I constantly keep speaking, most of my friends are Swahili countries, so I speak with them I learn new phrases and when I am forgetting it they push me back by telling me some phrases and I go back then.

**Reference 3**: on campus you know some of my friends are Swahili instructors, some of my friends that we hang out with all speak Swahili. The Swahili world gives more avenues that people around would help you fill the gap or to help you keep going but the French by then I didn't have anybody around me.

**Reference 4**: I mean that is when more like I evaluate myself by the feed back that I get from people who speak it like, you
like you Semwanza and some of my friends who speak Swahili, people who really speak it. Like you speak a phase and I am like "ooh, yeah" like vizuri, you have done well and stuff like that.

**Fatuma**

**Reference 1:** I was able to get into a place where I could hear people speaking it all the time, and hear the language being used, that's when it became real for me, because it was like, it wasn't about studying the formal construction of the grammar anymore, it was like, this is a living language. It doesn't matter so much ... I had to step back and let go of trying to be right, and proper, and correct all the time, and just try to use it. I think that's the best way to really learn a language.

**Reference 2:** I was able to get into a place where I could hear people speaking it all the time, and hear the language being used, that's when it became real for me, because it was like, it wasn't about studying the formal construction of the grammar anymore, it was like, this is a living language. It doesn't matter so much ... I had to step back and let go of trying to be right, and proper, and correct all the time, and just try to use it. I think that's the best way to really learn a language.

**Reference 3:** I did spend a lot of time cooking with people, and just sitting around chatting. People love to chat. That's a thing in East Africa. I feel like people sit around and drink tea and visit, and chat, all the time, and it's just like all this little small talk and chatter-

**Reference 4:** They would come and pay ten shillings or whatever to fill up their cans, and then they'd go home. It was just an endless stream of visitors at that place, and we would sit around in the courtyard, drinking chai, and like, everyone in the community would come through there and talk to them, and try to sell them things. I talked to kids, I talked to old men, I talked to mommas, I talked to everybody. I think just that culture of chit-chatting was really helpful for me, because people are really curious. Why are you here? What are you doing?

**Reference 5:** I think the best thing for me was just talking to people, and listening to people, and listening to Swahili music, and just hearing how it's used in everyday life. I used to eavesdrop on matatus all the time. Just listen to people's conversations.

**Reference 6:** I met all the Swahili, not only Swahili but other African language instructors from all over Africa and the US. Now when I go to SA, I hang out with the Swahili teachers. Those are my group of people that I like to hang out with. I
feel like I've kind of been adopted into this community of linguists and Swahili scholars, because that's really become my passion within African studies, is the language and the culture. Obviously I'm into women's and gender studies and education too, but I think the language is where I feel the most connection to that community. Like I said, I feel like the language has been my ... It's helped me get my foot in the door that otherwise might be closed to someone like me.

**Almasi**

**Reference 1:** I used to hold a very conversation in Kiswahili because I studied it a lot and I spoke as much as possible and my friends were like surprised and admire me but not speaking with me in Kiswahili, and like is it me or you don’t want to speak to me and like having some people brush me off and like gosh... she is not serious. But I am speaking to you in Kiswahili and they answer me in English.

**Reference 2:** You study it by speaking it, you study it by listening to it, by understanding certain little grammatical, but the grammar is very important. Because I feel like I am able to understand now things that were said in Shwambu because it is a Bantu language.

**Reference 3:** Its popular in Namibia and I like how did this happen? and the reason why it fascinates me when I was there I was with Kenyan people and it didn’t matter and all our close friends say and we had a lot of musician friends. But now if you listen to Namibian music they are just Swahili even if they are just thrown randomly in there. So I think that is interesting, but definitely it makes me want to study other languages.

**Reference 4:** I was able to speak with his relatives on the phone, they were going crazy. They couldn’t believe it all. First of all, there is this idea that if you are American you’re going to speak English, and if anything you will speak French. You will never ever speak Swahili, so why would you want to speak Swahili? Or on the other hand they will be like, “You don’t speak Swahili?” And then if you say no they wouldn’t be surprised at all, you understand what I mean? So, for them they were just as happy as shit. They couldn’t speak to me on the phone, they were laughing and talking about how am
actually speaking Kiswahili. Our conversation was constantly interrupted before we even made a point. “hey she said this...hey she said that!! ha ha ha...” Like going crazy about it! it was a nice reception, so when I went there they were happy to meet me because they felt that there will be some automatic apprehension to wanting to speak Swahili for some reasons. mm...in informal sense I had a great time speaking Swahili and I will say that like I need to get back there, I’m dying to get back there, am dying dying to be in a situation that I have to speak Swahili because only in those instance do I truly find that learning is taking place where I’m actually building on the language that I know, building on what I know. Using what I know, and building on what I know.

Najma

Reference 1: It's been awesome. There's a lot of Swahili speakers on campus. All my classes usually had, until I was in advanced, had at least twenty people in them so then I would able to talk to my peers in Swahili outside of class, like when I'd see them walking around and there were coffee hours offered outside of class and usually those were once a week so that was really helpful as well.

Reference 2: There would be certain days of the week where they wouldn't let me speak English so that really helped me. The biggest thing was there was a lot... I lived in a neighborhood where there was a lot of kids and it seemed that my host family's children were the most popular so different people's kids would come over a lot and they were kind of learning Swahili too so I would speak with them a lot and that really helped me because they weren't used to people who weren't speaking very proper Swahili so very quickly they would be like, "I don't think you're saying that right," or would just be very confused. That was probably the biggest thing that helped me with my grammar.

Reference 3: I really enjoyed talking to people at the market because everyone there just assumed that I didn't know anything, I only spoke English, and I really enjoyed having actual conversations with people because I was buying jewelry at a little market near Arusha and I had a pretty long conversation with the woman there about all the different things she was making and she was so impressed that I could actually speak Swahili and she gave me a couple of bracelets for free because she was just really glad that somebody was speaking Swahili with her.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Participant</th>
<th>Exemplar Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Haki**              | **Reference 1:** Drop anything else but not Swahili. That was helpful, that actually ended up to be the best advice I have ever received. Because I continued doing Swahili and after high school when there was no job I was able to get some little kibarua here and there because of Swahili and eventually Swahili was the one that gave me the opportunity to come to the U.S.  
**Reference 2:** Meyers Cotton is somebody who did a lot of work in East Africa. Code switching between Swahili and English, Swahili Kikuyu, Luyha, Maragoli. So she had a lot of work which she had done in East Africa. And it is when I was looking at this work of Meyers Cotton that the issue of Sheng’ used to come about because when you are doing code switching in Nairobi, there is no way you can not think about this phenomenon and how and how it manifests among the Sheng’ speakers. So, I decided to focus my research on Sheng’ and because it was something I was familiar with I did my thesis on Sheng’ language and of Nairobi on Sheng. |
| **Hazina**            | The idea of conversation partner for me was to encourage them to have someone to speak with or to practice with outside the classroom. It really hasn't caught up outside the classroom but it's something that I am still trying to figure out how I can encourage students to feel proud to be conversing and to be practicing Swahili with each other. |
| **Jasiri**            | **Reference 1:** I also started to convince my friends like opening e-mail address try to help them you know get how to do things on the Internet especially. So I don't know how but what I know I got some point just fell in love with computers. Had it been my decision to start that from the very beginning my school I would probably gone for a degree in computer science.  
**Reference 2:** I emphasize on collaboration but also I put a lot of emphasis on the use of technology to connect with resources that are available online, but also to connect with other members of the speech community elsewhere because |
technology can facilitate that, can connect people who speak their language from different places.  
**Reference 3**: Students are co-teachers as well, when you give students group work agree that they are working as teachers to help each other learn, so they have a lot of experience, they get a lot of experience in doing that too.

**Latifah**

I try to get, the time the students direct speaking and also the activities they do in class. Sometimes I ask them to sit in groups of 2 or 3 and work on some question and then tell the class what they found. When they do such kind of task, I feel like they have had the chance to do it on their own and so at least I give them a chance as supposed to me lecturing the whole time.

**Zakia**

**Reference 1**: To begin with, there are people who are; I think they are always technophobic? People who are always afraid of trying new things, he was so encouraging. “If you get stuck, please just give me a call”. So he volunteered a lot and actually I ended up giving him a lot of you know extra credits because of that, he dedicated his time sometimes they were telling me they were practicing last night at 8pm.

**Reference 2**: And there is one for building community...collaboration. For the community one, after the four years, or the four weeks or the one semester the student is going to be in your classroom they are going to live. But you need to keep that interest going on, try to give them some kind of you know...platforms through which they can continue learning Swahili.

**Reference 3**: And also he didn't want to participate in any activities that involve them, presenting stuff, or you know...role playing which is very crucial in language classes. So, all the students were like "nooo , you can do that, try try try..." (Peer influence) so wow, one tactic that I employed was to change all students almost everyday, their sitting arrangements.

**Adimu**

**Reference 1**: Yeah, I think I influenced my friends and when I came people like you who where around, Mary Gathogo was around and Dr. Githinji, Francis Semwanza, especially Semwanza, very important point, so my friends influenced me.

**Reference 2**: I mean we would meet each other and he would greet me in Swahili in the early days of it, thinking that everyone from Africa speaks Swahili. They ... "karibu," I say,
"What does karibu mean?" and I say why I need to study this and it sounded good to me, and sometimes I go to class if I can't catch something I would see him and he would explain to me or I would see Kaka and then I say, "Mzee what does this mean?" and then even sometimes when you are speaking in English they would just speak some Swahili phrase forcing you to study it and be on top of it. Yeah, trying to help with some phrases and some simple phrases and things like that. **Reference 3**: On campus you know some of my friends are Swahili instructors, some of my friends that we hang out with all speak Swahili. The Swahili world gives more avenues that people around would help you fill the gap or to help you keep going but the French by then I didn't have anybody around me.

**Fatuma**

**Reference 1**: That's great. I saw Pope John Paul the second in Nairobi when he visited. He conducted part of that mass speaking in Swahili. I was so impressed by that, because I'm like, he must be so fluent in so many different languages, and for him to take the time to learn how to say some things in Swahili showed some commitment to that place.

**Reference 2**: Usually I feel like my ... I guess I'm a social person, so usually I assessed my progress by how other people responded to me. If they were really encouraging and being like, "Oh, you're really fluent," or, "Your accent is really nice." A lot of people would comment on my accent, and I would feel really proud of that, and really happy that people gave me that feedback.

**Reference 3**: Yeah, but I'm so interested in that, how other people form their languages, and I always think about the Chinese students who are here are functioning in their second language in English, and it must be so hard, because English is a really hard language, and they're going to the university. Think about how different English is from Chinese, and yet they're doing it.

**Reference 4**: Yeah. They really encourage me, when I see people like that, as young adults, coming to a new country, learning a new language, getting a degree in that language. That is really hard. You know. You're doing it too. But English you've learned your whole life probably.

**Reference 5**: When we went to New Orleans, I was so excited that I got invited to go out with the Swahili language professors. We went out on Bourbon Street one night and drank beer and went out to eat, got to eat all this wonderful food in New Orleans with all these Swahili-speaking people. It
was so awesome. I feel really grateful that I've become part of that community.

### Almasi

**Reference 1:** My husband's first language is not KiLingala, my husband's first language is Kiswahili. He grew up speaking that, he doesn't even know is supposed ancestral mother tongue but he knows Kiswahili. Before he learned Lingala he spoke Kiswahili. Although emphasis placed on Congolese people Lingala, ah its just naturally came about that I will learn Kiswahili, because not only was I living with closest friends speaking Kiswahili now I had my closest friends and husband speaking together in Kiswahili. I had no idea what the hell anyone was saying.

**Reference 2:** I learned from people by just having conversations with people with my broken language because they were just happy to speak with me.

### Najma

I feel like for the most part, while I did study on my own, I depended a lot on other people when it came to speaking because I think it's really difficult to try to teach yourself to speak to other people if you're not speaking to other people so I did rely on other people, specifically for conversational aspects and that's mainly it.

### Theme – Internet Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Participant</th>
<th>Exemplar Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Haki</strong></td>
<td>But in terms of promoting this learner autonomy, right now we are going more and more towards the use of technology, using resources online and as far as Swahili is concerned we have always used a lot although I have not developed lots of online materials. But the video from the University of Georgia KIKO Kiswahili kwa kompyuta has always been helpful and of course other online work that I give them to go and perform on their own, and also the dictionaries are some of the tools that they easily interact and find some of the materials online. So those are some of the strategies that we do use in Swahili and Swahili right now has lots of these materials from various institutions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Hazina** | **Reference 1:** There are different websites, whether they are university based websites or it's Quizlet or whatever the website. There are games online. I encourage my students to go and play those games online.  
**Reference 2:** I could use Quizlet. I’m also in the process of creating my own materials. In the past I’ve used other people’s materials but I also find that I need to design my own content. In which is going to be relevant to my students. I’m also doing that to also encourage them to acquire vocabulary. Quizlet is good because it has a variety of activities. It could be flashcards, it could be question and answer. They have different ways of learning the same thing. I find that very very useful.  
**Reference 3:** The other thing that I have encouraged them to do on their own is to create, in small groups, create a skit. Then record it and … In the past I haven’t put that online. At least where I am now, they have media space where students can upload all kinds of materials whether they’re podcast or videos. That’s interesting for the students.  
**Reference 4:** Giving them an opportunity to go and search online and learn something. Learn new words online or do a task on their own they will consult the dictionaries when they stumble. When they can’t get the proper words that they want, they will get the dictionary, consult and get new words and use them in the context.  
**Reference 5:** For example, when they do a task online especially where they can monitor themselves. They get feedback from the Internet. |
| --- | --- |
| **Jasiri** | **Reference 1:** mostly asking the Internet sometimes I feel I need to remember how to do this, like finding out how to say so and so in this languages, and the I get some suggestions from the Internet. However, that has been like trying to ask the Internet to translate things for me not like learning how to speak but at least knowing what something means in their language.  
**Reference 2:** First of all by suggesting some technological tools they can use to learn the language…  
**Reference 3:** I emphasize on collaboration but also I put a lot of emphasis on the use of technology to connect with resources that are available online, but also to connect with other members of the speech community elsewhere because technology can facilitate that, can connect people who speak their language from different places. |
Reference 4: I create a lot of activities using technology, I have been using Hot Potatoes, I have been using iBook author authoring tool, I have been using a lot of other online tools to create a lot of resources, I mean a lot of exercises that students can use to learn the language autonomously.

Reference 5: So mostly the tools that I have been using as I said...I have been using Hot Potatoes to create a lot of exercises, I have been using Quizlet especially for vocabulary learning.

Latifah

Reference 1: Well, one thing I do I listen to an instructor online who is teaching, so I usually go to YouTube and I listen to basic Spanish lessons like the basic Spanish, I listen to them.

Reference 2: I also listen to Spanish people to Spanish people in my environment. Whenever I notice someone speaking Spanish I get keen and I try to see when they say Quendo… or (laugh) anything, I master the word and then go to Google and see what it means.

Reference 3: Yes, I do a lot of Google Translate, but we have sites that we have learned in my CALL class sites likes Niapod, and also well they are quite many.

Reference 4: Maybe for them to prepare the lessons, most of them used PowerPoint presentations and their research was based on the Internet mostly.

Reference 5: But in the US my students are able to, to prepare this presentation and they would even copy and paste the links so that they'll just show me videos straight from the website.

Zakia

Reference 1: I start with Africa map, an interactive Africa map...

Reference 2: So, give them some very relevant you know like uh websites, BBC Swahili, VOA Swahili, connect them with other Swahili speakers…

Reference 3: And also the social media has saved a lot, because for instance, for those four years that I have taught at Indiana University, we have a Facebook page. And people are posting Swahili things and a lot of fun things all the time.

Adimu

Reference 1: I go to YouTube; I go to YouTube sometimes in my spare moments. I just put let’s say Swahili lessons on YouTube and I would be doing some multi tasking, so once I am doing something and I am still watching what is going on.

Reference 2: I mean you can go online check one or two
things, but there is no other... Like Google Translate something.

**Reference 3:** People no longer carry dictionaries or books and stuff like that, but we all have smart phones and we all have mobile phones, we all have you know laptops, so something quick and snappy that you touch it and stuffs are there like some quick phrases in Swahili or key phrases in Akan key phrases in Wolof. You touch an it and it's like an app or more videos online or audios.

**Reference 4:** Like everyday basic phrases that I should know, maybe "I have been busy doing something else," and you know you speak it to me and I am like, "what does that mean?" I secretly go online trying to check then I know that I am not doing very well.

**Reference 5:** Like I said earlier, if you are studying an African language, if you're studying Swahili here in the US you might need certain things to back you up, like an app and I keep going back to it because it is the easiest and we are in a world of IT these days or some ready materials online.

**Reference 6:** Google Translate is good so those are some of the things that are ... Maybe CDs or recorded audio tapes on then also I will also say the same thing. I mean apps know no boundaries, so if it's good it is also going to be good back home.

| Fatuma       | **Reference 1:** I think by the time I was in grad school, that's when I learned about kamusi online, and that was really helpful, to be able to go online and look up something really quickly.  
**Reference 2:** It helped a lot when Swahili went online. I used kamusi online, and then Google Translate now is available, so sometimes if I am trying to translate something, I can go on there. |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| **Almasi**   | **Reference 1:** my Kenyan friends, never spoke to me in Kiswahili even though like they will be like on Internet they can chat in Kiswahili and they are like I can’t believe it, I am so amazed blah blah blah… when we get face-to-face English!! I am glad to know it is not me alone.  
**Reference 2:** …Internet look for stuff up or just to say or look at the flash cards to build my vocabulary while I was there, and then that situation coupled with the fact that I have to speak Kiswahili I would say that now am studying Kiswahili in my mind, I don’t know anyone else’s definition. But for I was like now I am studying yeah. |
**Najma**

One thing that I did really helped me with like noun markers and different parts I made flash cards online so that really helped. And then making charts that are really consistent; stating with me, you, theirs etc.

**Theme – Training and Teaching Experience**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Participant</th>
<th>Exemplar Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Haki**              | **Reference 1**: So, you can see the issue of language what I was interested in wasn’t just something that started in the university, something which has the roots back in primary school because had I not done well in English and Swahili then high school I wouldn’t have been allowed to do German, and consequently I wouldn’t have wanted to go to German at KU. Unfortunately, KU I wasn’t able to do German not because I didn’t have scores but because it didn’t work. So mm eventually because of the system I had to look for courses that would suit me because it was highly competitive. It it really didn’t have much choice, so I looked for what I could do and I went to literature and I also took Swahili and history, and here I was after the second year you have to drop one, to specialize if you doing BA.  
**Reference 2**: Because I continued doing Swahili and after high school when there was no job I was able to get some little kibarua  
**Reference 3**: So I did look at morphology of Bantu languages which was you know it was something I was very familiar with; and the I read Meyers Cotton work on code-switching. And Meyers Cotton is somebody who did a lot of work in East Africa. Code switching between Swahili and English, Swahili Kikuyu, Luyha, Maragoli. So she had a lot of work which she had done in East Africa here and there because of Swahili and eventually Swahili was the one that gave me the opportunity to come to the U.S. to be the Swahili teaching assistant at Michigan State. If I had not done Swahili, I don’t think that chance to become the Swahili TA would have been available for me. And I can go on and on because I taught at Michigan State as a teaching assistant and that experience Swahili again I can say it was the most determining factor for me getting a position here at Ohio University.  
**Reference 4**: So one of the thing we did in Swahili is to really raise this interest until now we were able to split the class into |
two and now we have two sections of Swahili at elementary level. I think that was a huge improvement which was not there.

**Reference 5:** We had time to even go for the coffee hour. If we asked the students to come at the coffee hour and interact it was good. And we started the African Languages day, so there were all these new ways of people knowing that we had a Swahili program.

**Reference 6:** So mostly Swahili, let me say the first time uh was when I was teaching Swahili as a graduate student at Michigan State and and I think that was the time I was quite new in the teaching profession, and I had not mastered my area quite well. Uh as I gained more experience, nowadays management of the class and establishing your authority in the class is not an issue to me any more. If I go to class for instance, the students know that am very strict on time for instance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hazina</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reference 1:</strong> I went to Kenyatta University where I studied education with the concentration on English and Literature which I taught thereafter for many years, and then I joined Ohio University. For my masters, I did masters in applied linguistics with a certificate in teaching English as a foreign language, and then after that I attended Ohio University again, and acquired a Ph.D. in higher education administration and student affairs. After finishing my Ph.D. studies now I am currently at the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign teaching Swahili language and culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reference 2:</strong> Of course, I had expressed interest in teaching Swahili, I had talked about my credentials and eventually I got the [teaching assistantship and I taught Swahili for 1 and a half years when I did my masters. Then I taught it again in my final year of my Ph.D, I taught 2 classes, that was in 2014, 2015.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reference 3:</strong> I took a course in methodology and that was teaching methods in ESL. What I realized is that whatever methods that we talked about in the classroom were methods that I tried with my students whether it was giving tasks or whether it was conducting a class that was task-based with the students having to work in small groups or using the language itself because that was what is recommended using the language right from the start, instead of using English as we were taught back home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reference 4:</strong> The other class that I found very, very useful was the materials class. We had a class on materials where we</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
developed materials for learners of English as a 2nd language. I found most of the times even as I was thinking about the materials to create for this particular class, I found myself thinking about how I could use ... How I could create materials for my Swahili class.

In 2010, when I completed my masters, I attended a Swahili StarTalk training program where we had a 3-week session. 2 weeks we did online and then 1 week we ... I can't remember whether it's the other way round, 1 week online and the other 2 weeks at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, but we had intense training on the teaching of Swahili. Whether it was creating a syllabus or creating a curriculum or assessment and practical lessons on how to ... On methods on how to teach Swahili. I had that and at the end of it, I was given a certificate on teaching Swahili as a foreign language.

Jasiri

Reference 1: I do teach languages and I have been teaching Swahili for some years now. I taught at the University of Wisconsin Madison and I have taught at Ohio University since I came here in 2012 and taught also at the University of Florida. So I think basically that's what you need to know about me.

Reference 2: I have been teaching since the year two thousand and ten. I have been teaching before then but I wasn't teaching Swahili as a less commonly taught language, I was teaching this language in Tanzania and it was learned just as language like teaching, the grammar, teaching other aspects of language. I have been teaching this as a foreign language as in Less commonly taught language since twenty ten. I have taught in three different universities in the U.S. and in different programs at Ohio University, and in other universities as well.

Reference 3: I like using I like to teach using what we call communicative approach in classrooms... where language-learning focuses on context and you bring these real-life situations for the learning of language. This is different from the traditional approach that does a lot of grammar translations like giving students the grammar of the target language and comparing that grammar with the first language as the students.

Reference 4: If I had goals, I mean if I had a good plan, like knowing that I need to learn this, I need to accomplish this. If I had that, then I would start to look around and find out how I would get that, try to find resources be it people, or books, or anything that could help me learn. Probably setting goals
would have helped me.

Reference 5: For every activity I ask them to do is targeting a certain learning objective, learning outcome. So, what I see at the end of the day, were my students able to achieve this learning outcome? And if they were, then I know that this tool works, and if they were not able to do as much, I will realize okay, maybe this tool is not as good in this.

Latifah

Reference 1: Well, Before I joined university I taught some school and the language I taught was Kiswahili but when I went to university I studied English language and literature and when I was in my third year I went for teaching practice. Uh in a school called Mwangea in Voi and I taught English language and literature. After my fourth year before I came to the United States I taught English language to secondary school students.

Reference 2: Maybe I can just say that indeed Learner Autonomy is important especially language classes because language has 4 skills reading, writing, listening and speaking and all the skills should be put to practice for someone to learn a language effectively. For them to practice the 4 skills they should be given a chance.

Zakia

Reference 1: Because everything was making perfect sense especially given that I had just come from high school, Kenyan high schools, I taught for three and a half years in Kenyan high schools. And educational administration was mostly focusing on K-12 so most of the theories that we were learning they started making sense. oH I went through this, I experienced this, I have seen this, I am doing this. So, but at the same time I realized that since I was in college, I was so much obsessed with higher education politics students just demonstrating and

Reference 2: had some offers of teaching Swahili during the summer. So I taught Swahili at Indiana university since 2011 until last year, and also I got another offer of teaching Swahili at the University of Oregon. But these were really interesting programs and they have inspired me so much to the extend of wanting to write about them because they are not just ordinary programs. So, for you to teach there they wanted you to have gone through a certain training and to be a certified teacher of those programs.

Reference 3: The trainings are usually done in the summer, that was my first summer here and I didn’t anything to do. So,
someone told me oh there is this program that will be taking place in Wisconsin so if you don’t mind applying for it they are looking for teachers to be trained to teach Swahili here. I thought that this was a rude thing or it didn’t make much sense that I’m being taught how to teach my own language and the people who are teaching me are teaching me in English but anyways, I attended it and it totally changed my teaching of Swahili here in the U.S. because where we are coming from we just learn it and we just teach it but we have never thought or never thought of teaching it to people or preparing our learners or our students to teach it to people who have never heard the language or who have never interacted with Swahili speakers. So that is, the whole idea of Startalk programs plus as I said it is sponsored by the defense department so after the 2001 I think chair or the instructor called the U.S. I think there was a need for them to make sure that the American people are competent, they have developed and natured intercultural competencies that they know how other people who live outside their borders of the U.S. view the world, their cultures, their languages, and their attitudes towards everything. So they started targeting languages that they thought were of critical interest to them economically and politically. Yeah, that’s how I found myself in those programs.

**Reference 4:** It is based on five standards of teaching you know foreign languages to American students; it starts with communication, they call them 5C's; they have to teach them how to communicate within the context, that's why I am saying everything is presented within the context. And then there is the second C is about the cultures, so culture is so important and actually the teaching of grammar is not as important as the teaching of culture. The third C is about comparison, so they know their language, and then they know the cultural stuff that accompany their language, and you will also, be presenting them with the new culture of the new language so they can do some comparison linguistically and culturally. For instance, how do you greet someone in the U.S.? You can just wave but in Africa, East Africa especially where Swahili is spoken that might be considered to be very rude, right? Who says what to whom, when and how? So, all those things have to be within the context.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adimu</th>
<th>While studying African studies I also took some classes from the Scripps College of Communication and then when the time was up I applied and they looked up my background. I had done active journalism for like ten solid years, so they looked up my background they thought I am qualified. I wasn't going go else where, I was used to this environment, I knew the professors, I knew the town and the people. I had built a support system in my educational structure so why not take advantage of it.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Fatuma | **Reference 1:** I went to Kenya for six months, and as part of that program we studied Swahili informally and formally. We went to a language school outside of Nairobi called Hekima Language Services. The University of Nairobi was actually closed at the time. This was in '94 to '95, so the students were on strike. This was in the days of Moi. The university was closed down, so we kind of had an independent traveling program. We would go and stay with families on home stays in different parts of the country, and then we would have some formal instruction sometimes, and then we'd move on.  
**Reference 2:** I ended up going back to Kalamazoo, studied Swahili again for a semester with my teacher, Alwiya Omar, who is from Zanzibar. Now she's one of the leading scholars of Swahili in the US.  
**Reference 3:** I've kind of benefited from both formal and informal instruction in Swahili, and some of the things that I think have been the most helpful to me ... I think having that foundation in the grammar was what I needed in the beginning, although it wasn't fun, but having to know, this is how you construct a sentence, this is how you conjugate the verb. I had to learn all the different tenses.  
**Reference 4:** I talked about going to Star Talk. It was difficult because I was one of the very few non-native speakers to train as a teacher, but it also gave me a lot of insight and respect for the methodology of teaching African languages. There's a whole pedagogical field about how to study and how to best learn and how to acquire second languages. I didn't know all that background information as a student, but once I went and trained as a teacher, I was like, "Whoa, this is a huge field." It gave me a lot of respect and admiration for people who teach languages, because it's hard. Just coming up with really interactive activities and ways for students to get immersed in a place like Athens, Ohio, that's really hard to do. |
**Almasi**

*Reference 1:* When I see here I mean like as a graduate student after living in Namibia for some years and then deciding... after having my child and deciding I am going to live and go get my education I am going to apply to this graduate program in communication and development. Part of the curriculum requirement is to take a foreign language. There was no doubt that I was going to take Kiswahili. *Reference 2:* Yeah, so learning comes in goals.

**Najma**

I went to Tanzania for seven weeks. I really really enjoyed that experience. I lived 45 minutes outside of Arusha and so that was really fun. We got to go to Machame, for a little bit we went to Zanzibar, and we went to somewhere else that was pretty close to Kilimanjaro that was really cool, and we saw the Ngorongoro crater and all those were just like awesome experiences and I don’t know when I get that experience again.

**Theme – Digital Devices**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Participant</th>
<th>Exemplar Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Haki</strong></td>
<td>I know I told you guys ever to turn to your computers or cellphones unless I allow you to do …now is the time you can turn on your cellphone, go online and check in the weather. Log in to the weather forecast now let’s work on that. This is the time you use technology to achieve your own ends. Use in a nice way, otherwise unless you control it it can be misused in the classroom and you know instead of helping it becomes a hindrance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hazina</strong></td>
<td>Ask them to read and record on podcast and then ... Because that gives then gives them an opportunity to read on their own and to practice reading on their own.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jasiri</strong></td>
<td>…giving students devices, allowing them to work on devices on their own time. That helps student’s individual discoveries and customizing learner, learning preferences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Latifah</strong></td>
<td><em>Reference 1:</em> Usually project the pictures using the projectors so that they can, I prepare slides and they can see the pictures and name them and try to construct sentences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference 2</td>
<td>Just like I explained, the students in the US prepare their presentations and they were able to include pictures and videos and audio materials.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Zakia | **Reference 1**: started showing a lot of video clips concerning their majors. Things to do with politics in East Africa, things to do especially when president Obama visited Obama that was a huge thing. We watched his speech for a whole one-hour in class.  
**Reference 2**: I tried, he was always attached to his iPad.  
**Reference 3**: provide a list of video clips, Swahili songs that they can watch. |
| Adimu | **Reference 1**: I open my computer no body is there I listen to YouTube a lot, I catch it, I talk to friends, on my own.  
**Reference 2**: To me I am constantly interacting with my smartphone. I use it a lot, I even use it to write a proposal and I got some time so I don't my smart phone if you have something that on net, wherever you are on the plane, in the house, my company office, you can interact. Something like an app can help.  
**Reference 3**: Maybe CDs or recorded audio tapes on then also I will also say the same thing. I mean apps know no boundaries, so if it's good it is also going to be good back home. |
| Fatuma | I think another thing that really helped was listening to broadcasts on the radio, or on the computer, or on the TV. Even if I couldn't understand, because like on KBC, he talks so fast, and it would be so hard for me to follow, but just ... I really challenged myself to listen to those broadcasts, because I could pick out little bits of news stories. |
| Almasi | And I carried around the notepad, and I wouldn’t look at the notepad. The notepad was for me in private; sometimes someone would say something to me and I wouldn’t realize what they had said until like 10 minutes later when I thought about. |
| Najma | A lot of it was, like I said, making flashcards outside of class and then going through those and then I would also try to use as much vocabulary that we learned in that week. |
Appendix I: Case by Case Summary Extracted from MAXQDA

Figure 9a. MAXQDA summary extraction for Haki
Figure 9b. MAXQDA summary extraction for Haki
Figure 10a. MAXQDA summary extraction for Hazina
Figure 10b. MAXQDA summary extraction for Hazina
Figure 11a. MAXQDA summary extraction for Jasiri
Figure 11b. MAXQDA summary extraction for Jasiri
Figure 12a. MAXQDA summary extraction for Latifah
Figure 12b. MAXQDA summary extraction for Latifah
Figure 13a. MAXQDA summary extraction for Zakia
Figure 13b. MAXQDA summary extraction for Zakia
Figure 14. MAXQDA summary extraction for Adimu
Figure 15a. MAXQDA summary extraction for Almasi
Figure 15b. MAXQDA summary extraction for Almasi
Figure 16a. MAXQDA summary extraction for Fatuma
Figure 16b. MAXQDA summary extraction for Fatuma
Figure 17a. MAXQDA summary extraction for Najma
Figure 17b. MAXQDA summary extraction for Najma