

Generalization of Individual Differences in Second Language Learning

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Abstract

This commentary is based on the analyses of the participants' responses provided in written form while filling the questionnaires. The purpose of the study was to identify and analyze factors in individuals' experiences about second language acquisition. The study was conducted through a research questionnaire. The questions were designed for particular outcomes needed for the research. The research was to find motivational, social, and demographic factors in learning second language. The research participants were the successful users of second language. The paper also discussed the different influences from society, and profession which are a support to learn second language or sometimes these influences work as hindrance. Questionnaire also dealt with the usefulness of language books and effectiveness of language teachers. The project involves 4 participants who filled in the answers. 50% of them have provided very short answers but the ideas are understandable and interpretable, the rest gave detailed responses which remained more supportive for the analyses. Over all it was to obtain a general view about the above mentioned influential factors which may result positive or negative during the process of second language acquisition.

INTRODUCTION

A very large number of studies have shown that second language learners usually speak an L2 with varying degrees of foreign accent [1,2,3,4]. A foreign accent can be defined as "non-pathological speech produced by second language learners that differs in particularly systematic ways from the speech characteristic of native speakers of a given dialect". Similarly, other authors [5,6,7] have used the term foreign accent to refer to the deviations perceived in the pronunciation of non-native speakers from native speaker norms.

The purpose is to discuss "conditions for learning a second language," Or "L2 learning conditions." Language is viewed as: (a) systematic, generative, and used for communication; (b) a set of arbitrary symbols (primarily vocal but also may be visual) that have conventionalized meanings; (c) used in a speech community and culture; and (d) acquired by all people in certain universal ways though with minor varieties [8]. L2 learning refers to the learning of another language once a first language L1 has been learnt [9]. Learning conditions are the factors, either internal or external, influencing learning [10]. Thus, L2 learning conditions are the inner or outer influences on the conscious, active gaining of communication capacities in a post L1 language. [11,12] presented socio affective outcomes almost as an afterthought, representing them as a minor subtype of strategic outcomes. [13,14] listed 74 conditions divided into eight groups: linguistic outcomes, psycholinguistic conditions, individual differences in ability and personality, linguistic issues, social context of L2 learning, attitudes and motivation, learning opportunities, and optimal conditions for formal L2 learning. [15] discussed the influence of language and language related attitudes on L2 motivation within diverse geographical and educational settings; the impact of intercultural contact on L2 motivation; the issues related to the students' selves and their relationship with L2 learning; age related differences in L2 learning and motivation; and the role of English as an increasingly global language and its impact on L2 motivation.

METHOD AND MATERIAL

Before commencing the analytical commentary I would rather express the basic units of discussion and the expected outcomes from them which are the whole structure of the study are listed below in Table 1

Table 1: Factor affecting the learning outcomes

Unit No.	Factors	knowledge to be drawn
1	Motivation	To know different motivational factors in L2 learning.
2	Age matter	To generalizing the idea of appropriate age to learn second language. To also know general views of people about the appropriate of L2 learning.
3	Challenges in learning process	To know that what types of challenges are faced during the L2 learning process
4	Facilitating factors	To know what facilitates the people generally in the L2 learning process
5	Personality factors to overcome challenges	To know how people behave to overcome the different challenges during the course of L2 learning.
6	Effectiveness of a language teacher	To know if the learners need the language teacher or they can learn the L2 without the help of any teacher.
7	Usage of Language books	To know to what extent the language books are helpful and supportive and which book or language course is more appropriate among the available resources in market. And also to know if learners don't use any book then from where they fill the gap, what is the alternative tool.
8	Role of social media	To know that what role social media generally plays in L2 learning
9	Influence of L1 in learning L2	To know how L1 affects L2 learning process either positively or negatively.
10	Methodology	To know the possibility of generalizing the procedural implementation for various learners or otherwise.
11	Social factors	To know that to what extent society is involved in any one's L2 learning process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Now for the itemized discussion along all relevant details, expected outcomes and purpose and that either the purpose is fulfilled or creating new issues to be solved. Item 1 was about the motivational factors among L2 learners. 50% response was as *“it is the need of the time English is required for the best professional performance across the globe”* 25% said that it is advantageous *“being fluent in English”* and it helps in many ways and provides numerous opportunities, right direction, and *“uniform success across”*. The results are shown in Figure 1.

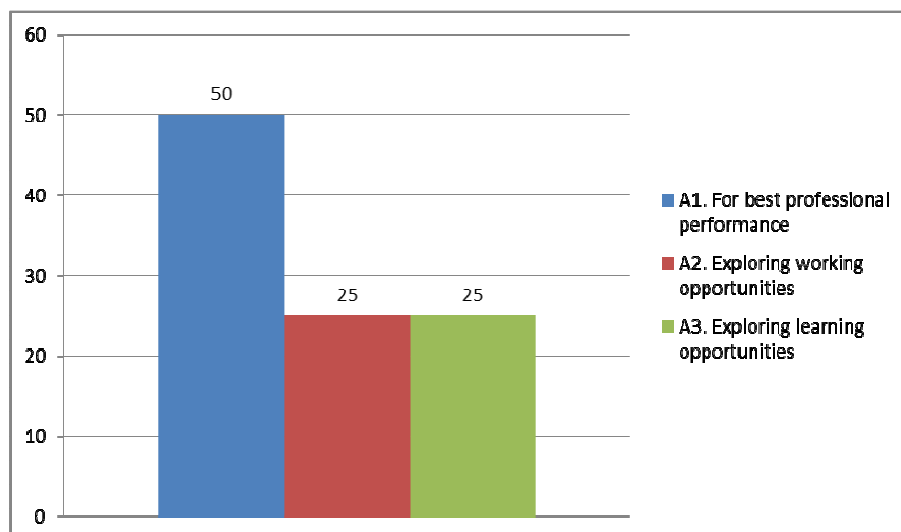


Figure 1: Effect of different motivational factors in L2 learning.

The remaining 25% mentioned their interest in getting “advanced *learning opportunities*” through second language. The comments clearly demonstrated that in a generalized view more than 50% learners are motivated towards L2 as it is a tool to get along with the modernized world where the communication is given a focal concern. Since there is a concept of global village around the world it is very obvious to be equipped with all the required tools of communication and mixing with other nations to work together for the mutual benefits. We also get a very clear idea that 25% learners learn L2 to enhance their knowledge and to avoid any hindrance or obstacle in the way of learning new knowledge. Here we generalized two motivational factors one is professional intention and the other is knowledge enhancement.

Item 2 discussed age factor, for this we have varied responses. 25% participants stated that they learnt it in age of 15; another 25% mentioned that they learnt it in early childhood; next 25% stated their experience of travelling which enhanced the language learning at satisfactory level; the remaining 25% mentioned that they learnt it during post-graduation studies.

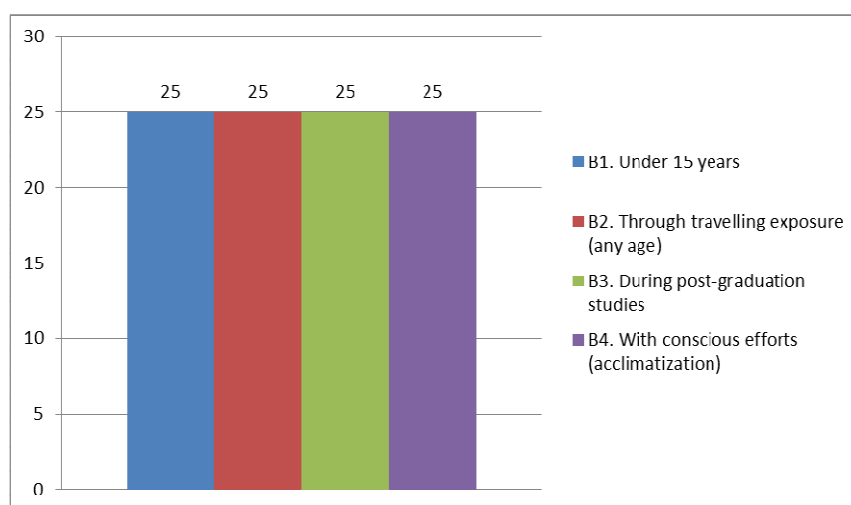


Figure 2 General views of people about the appropriate of L2 learning

Since this is a contextualized study so here we draw very interesting findings that in Pakistan it is varied from person to person that how and when they undergo L2 learning process. Here is raised another point that exposure is the key to learn language; 25% of our participants got exposure and learnt the language without any intentional efforts and exercise. It is very much relevant to the human nature as social being where ever he/she exists, get the shade of the surroundings or environment and they get acclimatized in using the same language they hear. Item 3 demonstrated the challenges which L2 learners face. 50% responses were stated about the grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation difficulties at the early stage of learning.

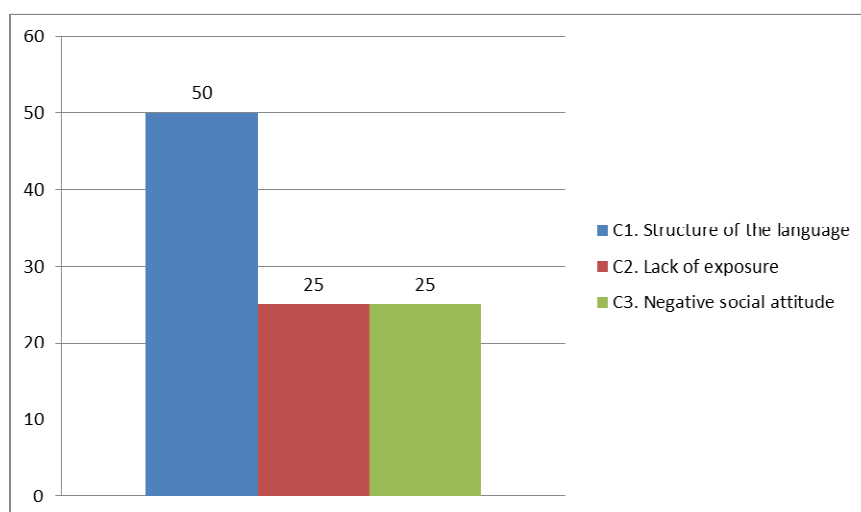


Figure 3 Types of challenges are faced during the L2 learning process

The 25% learners who had practical exposure by traveling across borders, they faced grammar problem like they never paid attention on and considered it useless and still after a great deal of experience with language they feel grammar is not always alright to learn it's a big challenge in L2 learning process. From remaining 25% of participants we received very unique comment about challenges they face and that are "*social and cultural problems*" they did not describe what sort of social and cultural problem are challenging for them but being a Pakistani I can assume the reasons behind these comments. Here I mention my three assumptions that may be tested for their validity and worth in the due course of the time in future, one is that when in the Pakistani context one speaks English as second language he/she sometimes considered arrogant, class conscious, snobbish and showy, so in the light of this assumption we can make another assumption that people who are down to earth and humble and not showy in nature they want to avoid second language usage in society just to avoid the above mentioned tags on their personalities. My third assumption is also made out of the first one that if 25% learners are avoiding using L2 in spite of having the knowledge it means they are creating a culture around them which doesn't let others to come up to break the ice.

Item 4 was about the facilitating factors in L2 learning. Here we got 100% response in favor of supportive environment but difference here in these responses was of environmental factors almost everyone is agreed that friends family and society plays important facilitating role in case if they are of supportive nature.

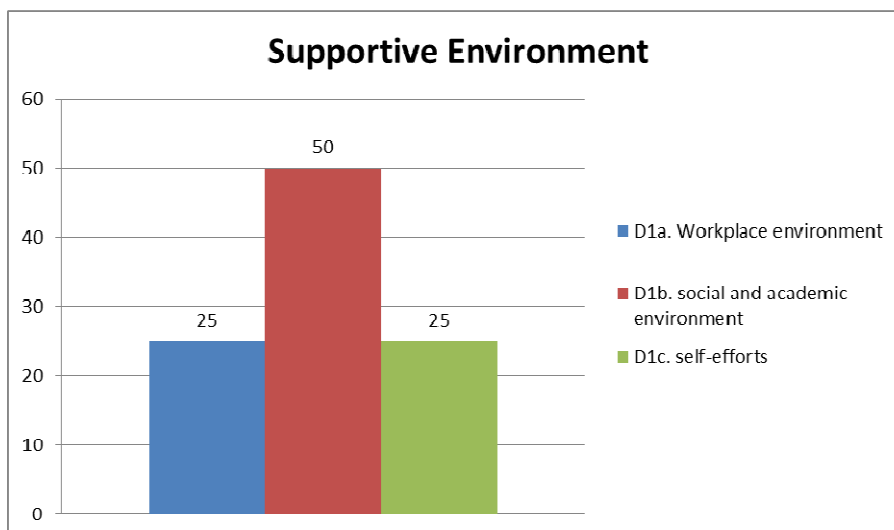


Figure 4 Things that facilitates the people generally in the L2 learning process

Here we also got from 25% participants that such a work place where language is used help a lot in learning and enhancing the communicative competence in L2. 50% mentioned that books media and peer level discussion also help. And another 25% emphasized that self-efforts are more important but I can still arise this question that to what extent self-efforts can support? They can help in gaining and acquiring the knowledge but to use it again we need social factors to interact and react.

Item 5 dealt with the ways to overcome the challenges they face during the L2 learning process. Here responses are 100% similar in case of doing more and extra practice and exercise. But some different opinion are also observed i.e. 50% responses said that they use the internet facility to overcome small challenges and barrier and it helps a lot in enhancing their knowledge.

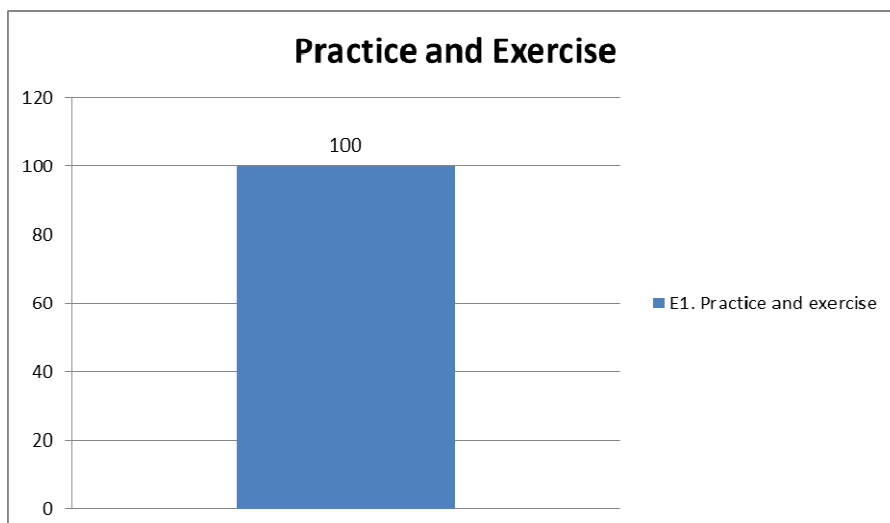


Figure 5 People behavior to overcome the different challenges during the course of L2 learning.

Item 6 got varied responses. 75% were agreed that language teacher is a help but they measured the extent till 60% and the rest of the 40% is to be covered by other ways. 25% said that they “*never sit with a language teacher*” but their environmental factors and exposure provided them support (i.e. working in a multinational company, travelling).

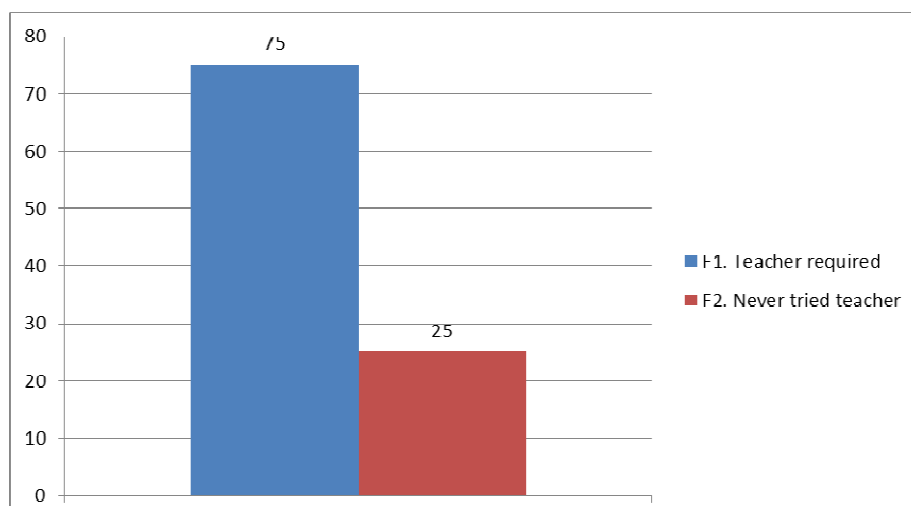


Figure 6 Learner’s need for the language teacher or they can learn the L2 without the help of any teacher.

Item 7 talked about the books and their importance in L2 learning process. 25% said they never need any book due the environmental support and 75% agreed that books are really helpful particularly oxford dictionaries and grammars. Item 8 inquired the role of media and social media in L2 learning process. Here we got 100% favor to media factors like film and TV. All agreed that media helps and 25% focused that listening BBC and CNN is a great support to enhance L2 competence. 75% were also agreed that social media provides interaction and interaction is the effective learning technique in case of languages.

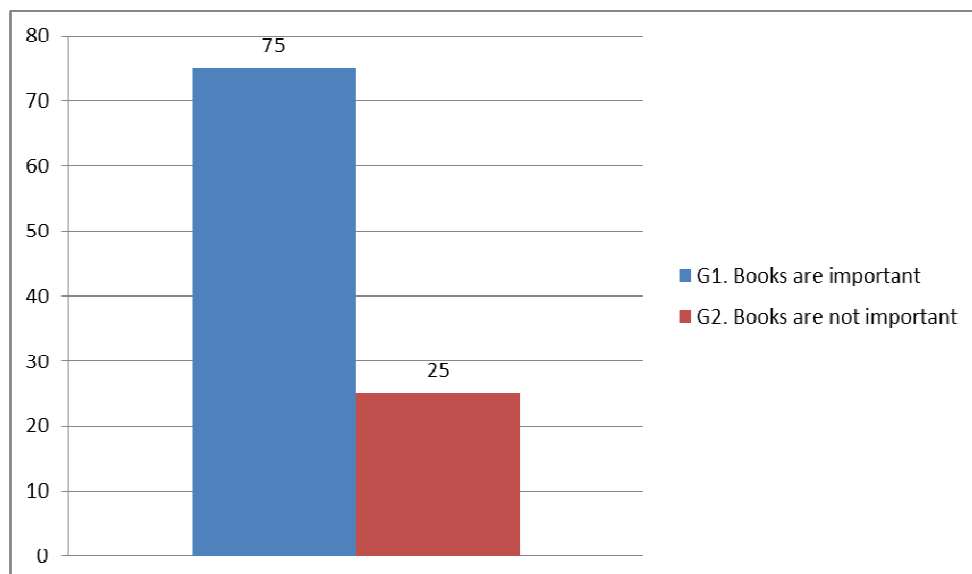


Figure 7 Extent to which language books are helpful and supportive

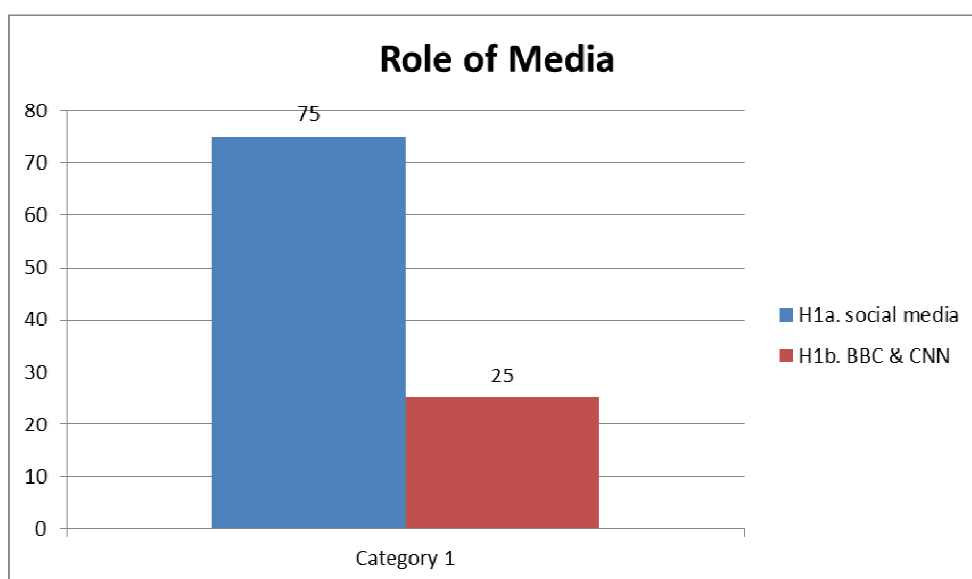


Figure 8 Role of social media in L2 learning

Item 9 viewed that in 75% learners it is a help to understand the second language as translation is used make learning. But 25% said that it is a hindrance and diverting factor for them as response says “*first language was hindrance in learning*”. Item 10 inquired about the generalized ways of learning L2. 75% responses were the same in favor of traditional learning and that they are useful but it is very less around 25% who had their own unique experiences and that can hardly be implemented on others. But still it is 75% generalized that predefined lines of language learning and theories work on majority.

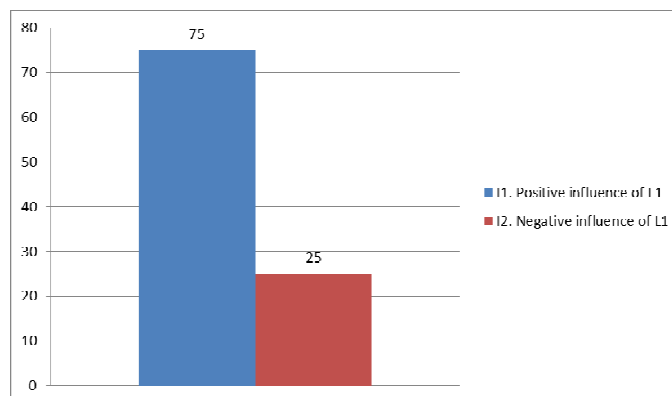


Figure 9 To see how L1 affects L2 learning process either positively or negatively

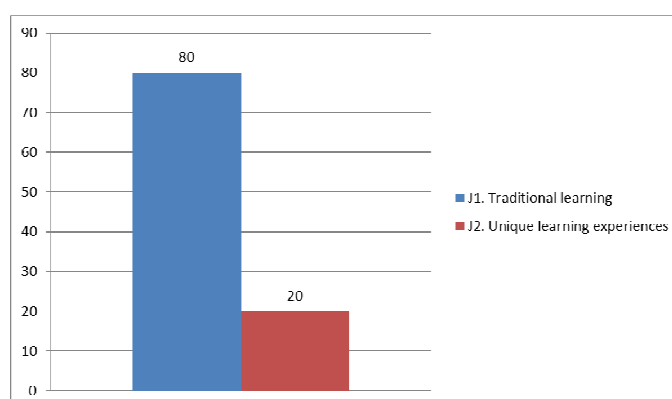


Figure 10 Possibility of generalizing the procedural implementation

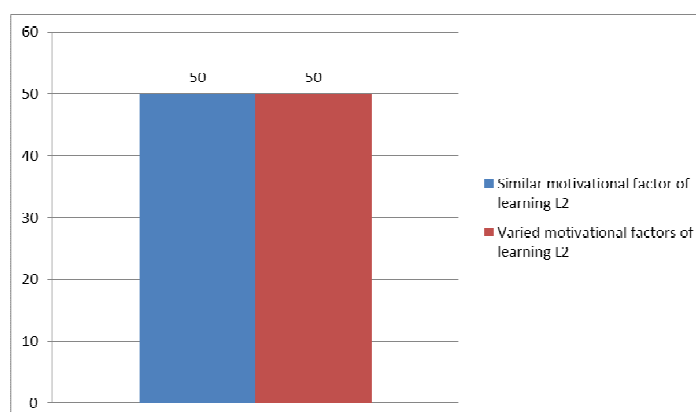


Figure 11 Extent to which society is involved in any one's L2 learning process

Our own experience which is a bit unique in its own sense but it still confirms the traditional learning of L2. We can say that motivational factors can be different but again 50% learners have the similar motivation if they vary they would be having some personal matters involved there. But professional, academic and social factors are almost the same.

CONCLUSIONS

It is concluded that though the motivational elements are different person to person at personal level but they are almost the same on social, professional and academic needs. Further we observed that the traditional learning style is the best one but traditional here means the regular one the methodology which is adaptable to the

changes of time i.e. immersion of social media. Still the role of the printed books, dictionaries, friends and family is effective and the core of the success is the self-initiative and hardworking which is the key to get into every type of success.

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