The Impact of Self-directed Learning Strategies on Reading Comprehension

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Abstract- For several decades, self-directed learning (SDL) has been a major focus of adult education (Merriam and Caffarella 1999) since the publication of Malcolm Knowles' book in 1975. However, this study aims to investigate the impact of self-directed learning on learners' reading comprehension proficiency and the measurements that teachers can do to encourage self-direction among adult learners. This is done by introducing self-direction strategies of reading comprehension, to the learners to be able to monitor their own learning. To this end, they applied more of the metacognitive strategies that are believed to be at the heart of self-directed activity (Grow, 2010). 92 upper-intermediate and advanced female Iranian EFL learners, studying English in *IELTS & TOEFL Center of Arian* in Gorgan, Iran, randomly selected and divided into two groups: experimental and control that the same syllabus and assessment procedures followed. The instrument includes an IELTS reading test. Finally, the data gathered by the experiment of the study was analyzed through SPSS software, using Independent Samples t-test. The results reveal that there is a significant difference between mean score of TDL (Teacher-Directed Learning) and SDL, and after treatment students perform better that proves superiority of self-directed over teacher-directed readers.

Key Words: Self-Directed Learning, Andragogy, Autonomy, Reading Comprehension

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INTRODUCTION

S tudents have lots of problems with reading a text; they are more concerned with getting the correct answer than with more important process of how to get the answer.

They depend too much on the dictionary to look up every unknown word. To help students overcome these problems, teachers can ask them to read and underline unknown words without looking up the meaning in dictionary; to use contextual clues to guess the general meaning; to skip unnecessary unknown words; and break them up into root, prefix and suffix.

When we help students develop awareness about their own thinking and learning processes, we are helping them think about the effectiveness of the strategies they use in reaching the goals they have set. Essentially, they are "thinking about thinking," a process known as metacognition. In general, use of a long-term metacognitive strategy of planning what is to be done, monitoring our progress, and evaluating the results is an effective way of helping students take more control of their own thought and feeling processes (Block, 2004). The literature of metacognitive strategies in reading comprehension reveals that poor readers in general lack effective metacognitive

strategies and have little awareness on how to approach reading. They also have deficiencies in the use of metacognitive strategies to monitor for their understanding of texts. In contrast; successful L2 readers know how to use appropriate strategies to enhance text comprehension (e.g., Pitts, 1983). According to Block (2004), " metacognition [in this field] can be defined as a reader's awareness of (1) what he or she is thinking about while reading, (2) what thinking processes he or she initiates to overcome literacy challenges, and (3) how a reader selects specific thinking processes to make meaning before, during, and after reading."

Knowles (1975) claimed that there is convincing evidence that people who take the initiative in learning (pro-active learners) learn more things and learn better, than do people who sit at the feet of teachers passively waiting to be taught (reactive learners) (Knowles, 1975: 14). The main characteristic of self-directed learning, according to Long (2002), is the degree to which the learner maintains active control of the learning process.

An emphasis on student self-direction and efficacy means that we teach and engage students in specific strategies that offer them opportunities to make decisions and solve problems on their own without being told what to do at all times. It means we provide them with strategies designed to help them process information effectively and to be self-confident, believing that they have the abilities to succeed. And perhaps most important, we help students become more reflective about their thinking and learning processes.

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of self-direction on learners' reading comprehension proficiency, students' accomplishments, and teacher's role in this area as

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well as suggesting some helpful reading strategies to promote learner autonomy. Thus, specific strategies we can provide include encouraging students to set their own goals for personal development and instructional improvement, and planning ways to achieve these goals. To reach goals they have set, students can benefit from learning a variety of problem-solving strategies as well. To this end, learners were trained and practiced in SDL reading strategies that preferably were metacognitive strategies. Some key concepts concerning the subject are explained below.

The study is designed to address the following specific question:

- Does SDL influence reading comprehension proficiency significantly?

Following are some of the specific hypothesis based on formulated research question:

H0. Self-directed strategies do not have any significant impact on EFL learners' reading comprehension proficiency over teacher-directed strategies.

SELF-DIRECTED LEARNERS

Self-directed learning, which has its roots in adult education, is an approach that has been tried with learners in elementary and secondary schools. There may be slight variations in how different educators define SDL, but a survey of the literature on the subject identifies several tenets that are central to the concept.

-As the term suggests, SDL views learners as responsible owners and managers of their own learning process. SDL integrates self-management (management of the context, including the social setting, resources, and actions) with self-monitoring (the process whereby the learners monitor, evaluate and regulate their cognitive learning strategies) (Bolhuis, 1996; Garrison, 1997 as quoted in Antonio, 2001).

-SDL recognizes the significant role of motivation and volition in initiating and maintaining learners' efforts. Motivation drives the decision to participate, and volition sustains the will to see a task through to the end so that goals are achieved (Corno, 1992; Garrison, 1997 as quoted in 2001).

-In SDL, control gradually shifts from teachers to learners. Learners exercise a great deal of independence in setting learning goals and deciding what is worthwhile learning as well as how to approach the learning task within a given framework (Long,1994 as cited in Kerka, 2000; Morrow, Sharkey, & Firestone, 1993 as cited in Antonio, 2001).

-Teachers scaffold learning by making learning 'visible.' They model learning strategies and work with students so that they develop the ability to use them on their own (Bolhuis, 1996; Corno, 1992; Leal, 1993 as quoted in Antonio, 2001).

-SDL is, ironically, highly collaborative. Learners collaborate with teachers and peers (Guthrie, Alao & Rinehart; 1996; Temple & Rodero, 1995 as cited in Antonio, 2001).

-SDL develops domain-specific knowledge as well as the ability to transfer conceptual knowledge to new situations. It seeks to bridge the gap between school knowledge and real-world problems by considering how people learn in real life (Bolhuis, 1996; Temple & Rodero, 1995 as quoted in Antonio, 2001).

- Students learn to identify and value their own experiences in life. They learn to value personal experiences of others. They develop critical thinking, individual initiative, and a sense of self-worth and self-confidence.

- Through SDL, it is possible to learn how to learn, to learn how to see, to learn how to be, in always that make one more self-directing in many areas of life. It is a situational attribute an impermanent state of being dependent on the learner's competence, commitment, and confidence at a given moment in time (Pratt 1988, p.162 as quoted in Merriam, 2001).

The benefits of SDL are best described in terms of the type of learners it develops. The literature on SDL asserts that self-directed learners demonstrate a greater awareness of their responsibility in making learning meaningful and monitoring themselves (Garrison, 1997 as cited in Antonio, 2001). They are curious and willing to try new things (Long, 1994 as cited in Kerka, 2000), view problems as challenges, desire change, and enjoy learning (Taylor, 1995 as cited in Antonio, 2001). Taylor also found them to be motivated and persistent, independent, self-disciplined, self-confident and goal-oriented. Self-directed learning allows learners to be more effective learners and social beings.

Depending on the philosophical orientation of the writer, the goals of self-directed learning vary. Those grounded in a humanistic philosophy posit that self-directed learning should have as its goal the development of the learner's capacity to be self-directed. Knowles and Tough (1967 as quoted in Merriam, 2001) wrote from this perspective as do Brockett and Hiemstra (1991 quoted in Merriam, 2001). In their Personal Responsibility Orientation (PRO) model of self-directed learning, human nature that is "basically good . . . accepting responsibility for one's own learning" and being proactive drive their model.

TEACHER'S ROLE IN SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

The goal of educational process is to produce self-directed, life-long learners. Many current educational practices in public schools and universities; however, do more to perpetuate dependency than to create self-direction. Moreover, there is more than one way to teach

well. With some exceptions, good teaching is situational –it varies in response to learners. The teacher begins to provide some key characteristics of a learner who can take responsibility for learning: an ability to define one's own objectives; awareness of how to use language materials effectively; careful organization of time for learning, and active development of learning strategies.

Knowles visualizes the teacher role as that of facilitator of learning rather than teacher, procedural guide rather than content transmitter. One of the most important tasks of the teacher is to raise student awareness of their roles in learning. Taylor (1995 as quoted in Antonio, 2001) suggests engaging students in discussion on topics from the Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale. Examples of topics: I know that I want to learn and that I am a learner, so if I want to learn something, I can, and I like to learn and to solve problems because I know that thinking 'hard' can be fun. The exercise of evaluating oneself on such topics was found to have positively influenced learner awareness. Long (1994 as cited in Kerka, 2000), who works with readers, suggests generating similar discussion through the use of questions designed to help learners become aware of what good readers do and how to become one. Among the examples he provides are: Did you read better today than yesterday? Could you keep the ideas in your book straight in your mind? Were there words you did not know? How did you figure them out?

Learner participation in decision-making is another fundamental aspect of the SDL approach. Taylor advocates involving students in decisions concerning what is to be learned, when and how it should be learned, and how it should be evaluated. In addition, every proponent of SDL emphasizes the importance of allowing learners to pursue their own interests so that learning becomes more meaningful. Morrow, et al. (1993 as cited in Antonio, 2001) report that when writers are allowed to choose their own topics, they write more often and they write longer pieces. Students do not have to be given total freedom, however. Teachers could, for instance, establish a thematic framework within which students are given choices (Guthrie, et al., 1996; Temple & Rodero, 1995 as cited in Antonio, 2001). Teachers in this approach lead students to take responsibility of their own learning, encourage them to cooperate and consult with each other.

Long (1994 as cited in Kerka, 2000) and Bolhuis (1996 as quoted in Antonio, 2001) stress that teachers who want to encourage SDL must free themselves from a preoccupation with tracking and correcting errors, a practice that is ego-threatening (Guthrie, et al. 1996 as cited in Antonio, 2001). Long and Bolhuis advocate greater tolerance of uncertainty and encourage risk-taking, and capitalizing on learners' strong points instead of focusing on weaknesses, as it is

more beneficial for learners to achieve a few objectives of importance to them than it is to fulfill all the objectives that are important to the teacher. Leal (1993 as cited in Antonio, 2001) advocates allowing learners to explore ideas through peer discussions - even without fully intact answers - a process that can yield new and valuable insights. Corno (1992 as cited in Antonio, 2001) suggests allowing learners to pursue personal interests without the threat of formal evaluation. Even if they make mistakes while doing so, the activities will sustain their interest, transcend frustration, and eventually break barriers to achievement. According to Leal, Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading may be one way of accomplishing this objective in the reading classroom.

To establish the habit of self-monitoring, teachers need to encourage learners to reflect on what they did and to revise attempted work (Corno, 1992 as cited in Antonio, 2001). Keeping journals is one way of maintaining a record of the learning process. Teachers also need to model learning strategies such as predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing, so that students will develop the ability to use these strategies on their own. Teachers also need to allow individual learners to approach a task in different ways using different strategies (Many, Fyfe, Lewis & Mitchell 1996). Teacher should help students begin to recognize their different personality types, life-goals, and styles of learning; set high standards and motivate students to achieve them.

Since SDL stresses meaningful learning, Temple and Rodero (1995 as quoted in Antonio, 2001) advocate a situated learning approach, in which teachers bring real-life problems into the classroom for learners to work on. They advise against 'sugar-coating' work with fun, the rationale being that if the tasks are meaningful, learners will work on them willingly. Learners should also be allowed to collaborate with the teacher in determining deadlines and other regulations. For the language teacher, the issue is whether it is possible to help learners acquire and develop strategies of either kind which will enhance their ability to learn inside and outside the classroom.

Researchers have found that as children grow, they have an increasing desire for autonomy. SDL may be one way of harnessing that natural desire to help achieve a meaningful learning experience that will last through adulthood. Moreover, teaching reading strategies to self-monitor meaning can help students to become true readers.

READING STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

Reading comprehension strategies are seen as comprehension processes that enable readers to construct meaning from the printed page most effectively. In other

words, those strategies show how readers tackle a reading task, how they interpret their reading and what they do when they do not comprehend. Good readers draw on prior knowledge and experience to help them understand what they are reading and are thus able to use that knowledge to make connections. Struggling readers often move directly through a text without stopping to consider whether the text makes sense based on their own background knowledge, or whether their knowledge can be used to help them understand confusing or challenging materials. By teaching students how to connect to text they are able to better understand what they are reading (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000 as quoted in FOR-PD, 2004). Accessing prior knowledge and experiences is a good starting place when teaching strategies, because every student has experiences, knowledge, opinions, and emotions that they can draw upon.

Below are some examples of connecting statements for students to use as a reference or teachers can use them as prompts for classroom discussion.

This part reminds me of.... I felt like... (character) when I.... If that happened to me I would.... This book reminds me of... (another text) because.... I can relate to... (part of text) because one time.... Something similar happened to me when....

Tovani (2000 as cited in FOR-PD, 2004) offers reasons why connecting to text helps readers:

- It helps readers understand how characters feel and the motivation behind their actions.
- It helps readers have a clearer picture in their head as they read thus making the reader more engaged.
- It keeps the reader from becoming bored while reading.
- It sets a purpose for reading and keeps the reader focused.
- Readers can see how other readers connected to the reading.
- It forces readers to become actively involved.
- It helps readers remember what they have read and ask questions about the text

Reciprocal Teaching is an instructional strategy for teaching strategic reading developed by Annemarie S. Palincsar that takes place in the form of a dialogue between teachers and students. In this dialogue the teacher and students take turns assuming the role of teacher in leading the dialogue about a passage of text. Four strategies are used by the group members in the dialogue to use reading comprehension strategies independently, including text prediction, summarization, question generation, and clarification of unknown or unclear content. At the start the adult teacher is principally responsible for initiating and sustaining the dialogue through modeling and thinking out

loud. As students acquire more practice with the dialogue in small groups, the teacher consciously imparts responsibility for the dialogue to the students, while becoming a coach to provide evaluative information and to prompt for more and higher levels of participation. This shift from an instructor-centered approach to a student-centered approach is a central component of the reciprocal teaching process and encourages self-regulation on the part of the students (Palincsar and Brown, 1986). (For more information see: Palincsar and Brown 1984; Peter E. Doolittle, et al 2006; Oczkus, 2003).

There are a lot of other recent researches and strategies to promote learner autonomy but due to limitations of research it is impossible to mention and elaborate all of them through this paper.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Since the late 1980s we have seen a proliferation of terms relating to this concept of terms relating to this concept of 'self-directed learning': autonomous learning, self-monitoring, self-assessment, learner strategies, self-help learning strategies, strategic investment, learner training, self-study, self-access learning. The key concepts that have emerged, however, and around which others pivot, are those of *learner autonomy* (which for our purposes can be taken as synonymous with self-directed learning) as a goal for learners, and *learner training*, or the teacher's encouragement of their efforts towards that goal.

Malcolm Knowles was known as the father of andragogy, or adult education. About the same time that he introduced andragogy to North American adult educators, self-directed learning appeared as another model that helped define adult learners as different from children. Knowles (1975) himself contributed to the self-directed learning literature with his book "Self-Directed Learning: A Guide for Learners and Teachers," published in 1975, describing self-directed learning as "a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others", explaining the concept and outlining how to implement it through learning contracts. And it might be recalled that the first assumption underlying Knowles's view of andragogy is that learners become increasingly self-directed as they mature. The processes in self-directed learning include diagnosing one's own learning needs, setting personal goals, making decisions on resources and learning strategies and assessing the value of the outcomes (1968).

A second goal is the fostering of transformational learning (Brookfield, 1986, Mezirow, 1985 as quoted in Merriam, 2001 and Lowry, 1989). Transformational learning as presented by Mezirow posits critical reflection by the learner as central to the process. This critical reflection is an

"understanding of the historical, cultural, and biographical reasons for one's needs, wants, and interests. . . . Such self-knowledge is a prerequisite for autonomy in self-directed learning". (Mezirow, 1985, p. 27 as quoted in Merriam, 2001 and Lowry, 1989)

The third goal for self-directed learning is the promotion of emancipatory learning and social action. Just as andragogy has been criticized for ignoring the context of learning, some writers would like to see self-directed learning to be positioned more for social and political action than individual learning. Both Brookfield (1993 as cited in Merriam, 2001) and Collins (1996 as cited in Merriam, 2001) call for a more critical, political analysis of SDL.

How one actually works through a self-directed learning experience has generated a number of models of the process. The earliest models proposed by Tough (1971 as quoted in Merriam, 2001) and Knowles (1975) are the most linear, moving from diagnosing needs to identifying resources and instructional formats to evaluating outcomes. Models developed in the late 1980s and the 1990s are less linear and more interactive; in such models not only the learner but the context of the learning and the nature of the learning itself are taken into account. In Danis's (1992 as cited in Merriam, 2001) model, for example, learning strategies, phases of the learning process, the content, the learner, and the environmental factors in the context must all be taken into account in mapping the process of SDL.

Victori and Lockhart (2000) believe that one of the premises of any self-directed program should be that of enhancing students' metacognition to prepare them for approaching their own learning autonomy. Such a program should involve cyclic diagnosis of learners' beliefs about language learning, preferred styles, learning needs and objectives in order to endow the learners with criteria for choosing optimum strategies, resources and activities for their individualized program. Their purpose was to highlight the unifying role of metacognition in all levels of learner training.

What Merriam and Caffarella (1999) term "instructional" models of the process focus on what instructors can do in the formal classroom setting to foster self-direction and student control of learning? The best known of these is Grow's (1991 as quoted in Merriam, 2001 & 1994) Staged Self-Directed Learning (SSDL) model. Grow presents a matrix whereby learners can locate themselves in terms of their readiness for and comfort with being self-directed, and instructors can match the learner's stage with appropriate instructional strategies. For example, whereas a dependent learner needs more introductory material and appreciates lecture, drill, and immediate correction, a self-directed learner can engage in independent projects, student-directed discussions, and discovery learning.

In addition to goals and process, the literature can be categorized according to the learner and the extent to which self-directedness is a priori personal characteristic and associated with other variables such as educational level, creativity, learning style, and so on. Two scales of self-directedness, one measuring readiness (Guglielmino, 1997 as quoted in Merriam, 2001), and one measuring personal characteristics (Oddi, 1986), have been used in a number of studies. In addition to these empirical studies, the relationship between autonomy and self-directedness has been explored. Candy (1991, p. 309 as quoted in Merriam, 2001) writes that since a learner's autonomy is likely to "vary from situation to situation," educators should not assume that because a person has been self-directed in one situation, "he or she will be able to succeed in a new area: Orientation, support and guidance may all be required in the first stages of a learning project." Furthermore, Matuszowicz (1996 as cited in Kerka, 2000) provides one example of this in his work focused on developing self-direction in homeless adults. For perhaps the first time in their lives, this group recognized themselves and others as learning resources and learned through the practice of interpersonal behaviors and skills such as giving and receiving feedback. Similarly, in British open learning centers, O'Mahony and Moss (1996 as cited in Kerka, 2000) found that adult basic education students "identified a common bond and developed a *collective* self-direction" (p. 30) through work on a student committee; they also enhanced their sense of individual self-direction. A study of empowerment in community groups (Singh, 1993 as cited in Kerka, 2000) suggests that group learning processes can empower individuals to move from low to high self-directedness. In addition, the enhancement of individual SDL abilities tended to help groups become more empowering.

Guthrie, et al. (1996 as cited in Antonio, 2001) noted that the self-directed learners in a Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI) program demonstrated the ability to search for information in multiple texts, employ different strategies to achieve goals, and to represent ideas in different forms (drawing and writing). Morrow, et al. (1993 as cited in Antonio, 2001) observe that with proper planning and implementation, self-directed learning can encourage students to develop their own rules and leadership patterns.

In one school of thought, SDL is based on the autonomous, independent individual who chooses to undertake learning for personal growth (Merriam and Caffarella 1999). Braman's (1998 as cited in Kerka, 1999) review of literature suggests that the SDL construct has been primarily based on individualistic attitudes and values, in keeping with the viewpoint that lifelong learning

has primarily instrumental objectives related to individual responsibility and work force development. So, the goals of an individual and his/her cultural group may conflict, thus hindering the opportunity for self-direction.

However, another school of thought stresses the social construction of knowledge and the social context of learning. One of Brookfield's criticisms of SDL research was that it ignored social context by focusing on the individual, isolated learner, although Long refutes Brookfield's criticism in an analysis of more than 500 studies, as much as 90% of which were concerned with SDL in social settings. Maehl (2000 as cited in Kerka, 2000) asks, "Is self-directed learning possible if knowledge is socially or culturally constructed?" (p. 51). Rowland and Volet (1996) also call for more awareness of socio-cultural perspectives. They suggest that a more postmodern view of the *self* in self-directed learning challenges the notion of universal individualism and that, from this perspective, adult learning has significance "for a learner's community as well as for the individual" (p. 100).

Moreover, O'Donnell (1999 as cited in Kerka, 2000) goes the furthest in emphasizing the collective over individual dimension when he presents a rationale for what he calls "selves-directed learning" (p. 251).

In this paper we will argue Braman's (1998 as cited in Kerka, 2000) view that he believes goals of an individual and his/her cultural group may hinder the opportunity for self-direction. we will present data that support Rowland and Volet's (1996) view that adult learning has significance "for a learner's community as well as for the individual" by making learners practice in groups and examine individually.

Method

92 out of 150 upper-intermediate and advanced EFL female high school students studying in *IELTS & TOEFL Center of Arian* in Gorgan, Iran selected randomly and divided into two groups: control and experimental. The control group trained in teacher-directed strategies and the experimental group trained and practiced SDL reading strategies in an 8-week course of English reading texts. The class met twice per week for a total of 8 weeks, with each class meeting lasting approximately 90 minutes every session 30 minutes using SDL approach with strategy training and practice. The average of their ages is 15 to 25.

Material

The students both in control (TDL) and experimental (SDL) group are assessed individually in an IELTS reading comprehension test before, to homogenize, and after a-16-session practice to see the impact of each TDL and SDL. Materials are similar both in format of questions and their

level. Learners had 25 minutes to answer the questions. The test consists of 3 parts with a total of 13 questions:
-4 items in part A that learners were supposed to choose the most suitable heading for each section/paragraph from the list of headings
-5 items in part B to answer multiple-choice questions
- 4 items in part C to identify True/False/Not Given statements to reflect the opinions are implied or stated by the text.

Procedure

To this end, control group students experienced summary writing and rehearsing strategies in which they are only passive recipients of the meaning their teacher construct from the printed passage and never try to use the knowledge of their own to understand the subject better and experimental group learners are trained and practiced in pre, during and post reading strategies. The researchers developed an instructional curriculum to practice some control of the learners' own learning. The session began with some warm-up activities that include having students to predict text content using the title/subtitles and picture illustrations or information and make them to think of a set of questions about the topic and a personal experience to make a connection between what they knew before and what they want to learn and activate their prior knowledge. Then the teacher models the metacognitive strategies and then asks the students to regulate their own learning and self-evaluate them. After that, they practice using contextual clues and key words to aid comprehension, paraphrase the sentences, use think-aloud method and students write their own story endings using the list of predicted conclusions within small group components focusing on helping learners develop general comprehension strategies that could be used to access meaning in a broad array of texts, regardless of the texts' vocabulary and/or grammatical features as well as asking some problem solving questions and have student discussions or projects around the topic to enable them make analytical decisions on their own and also be able to relate the subject to their own experiences. They practice skills in time management, project management, goal setting, self-evaluation, peer critic, information gathering and use of educational resources as well. During the whole project one of the researchers observed the classes to evaluate learners' needs and objectives and turn the teacher toward their goals and their preferred strategies.

Later on, as follow up activities and to ensure learners' autonomy, students were applied higher-order thinking

strategies which help them construct meaning from what they read and help them monitor their progress toward their goals and turn them to extensive reading of short stories, magazines, books and newspaper. As students gain practice and confidence in using these strategies -within small groups and then as individual readers, the teacher assesses individual learners' abilities to comprehend a text through a specifically English reading proficiency test of IELTS.

The Students both in control and experimental group completed a post-test that closely paralleled the pre-test. After that, learners in experimental group are interviewed after treatment and it reveals that all of the learners have positive attitudes toward SDL.

The data gathered by the experiment of the study is analyzed through an independent samples t-test that is discussed below.

Result

The paired samples t-test has been displayed in Table1:

Table1 (a)
Group Statistics of the Study

Group Statistics

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Reading	TDL	46	14.6848	1.33483	.19681
	SDL	46	17.9565	1.38575	.20432

Table1 (b)
Independent Samples t-test of the Study
Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Reading	Equal variances assumed	.022	.884	-11.533	90	.000	-3.27174	.28369	-3.83534	-2.70814
	Equal variances not assumed			-11.533	89.874	.000	-3.27174	.28369	-3.83535	-2.70813

In Table1 (a), the mean score for the TDL group and for the SDL group is about 14.68 and 17.95 respectively. This shows that mean score of SDL group is more than that of TDL which proves better performance of the self-directed learners of the study over teacher-directed learners, but these differences in these two groups are not significantly noticeable and meaningful to result in complete superiority

of SDL over TDL. So it needs to compare the means through the Independent Samples t-test.

In Table 1 (b), the Independent Samples T-Test reveals a statistically reliable difference between the mean score of TDL that has Mean=14.68, SD=1.33 and SDL has Mean=17.95, SD=1.38, t(90)=11.53, P=0.00, α=0.05.

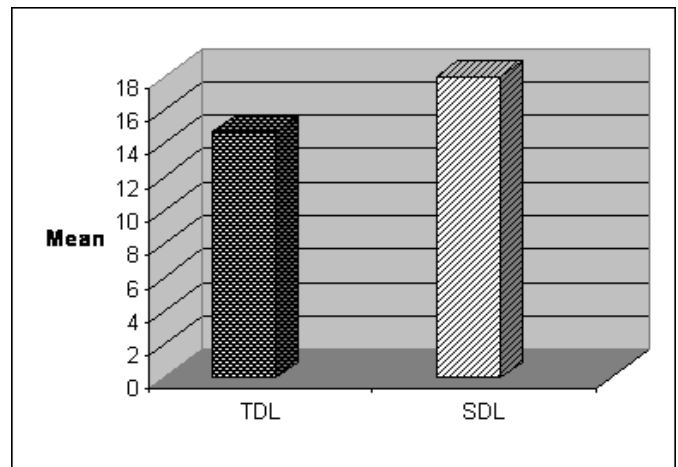$P<0.05 \quad \rightarrow \quad$ The null hypothesis is rejected.

Figure1. Mean Score TDL-SDL Diagram of the Study

Figure1, also, points that there is a significant difference between the mean score of TDL and SDR, and after treatment students in experimental group performed better that proves superiority of SDL over TDL strategies.

Discussion

Based on this study the null hypothesis that self-directed strategies have no significant influence on Iranian EFL learner's reading comprehension proficiency is rejected. And at the end of the course the strategic learners that were equipped with SDL strategies were able to identify their own learning needs, setting personal goals, making decisions and generally to take the responsibility of their own learning not only in the educational context but also be able to succeed in any new areas and contexts and their learning is much more purposeful and planned than TDL groups that it promotes collaborative learning among students.

The authors have experienced SDL strategies with upper-intermediate and advanced-level students and in

some cases we invited feedback from the students on their impressions and thoughts of the strategies covered during the course. What follows are an indication of students' retrospective comments on the efficiency of these strategies.

1. The strategies you applied made me conscious and active. I used to read a text word for word until then, being afraid to misunderstand the contents. Now I'm trying to skip as many words as possible even when I am going to read about something not familiar, and I am going to deal with the text I have already had quite a few knowledge.

2. There are many positive aspects of using predictions. Firstly, we immediately think about the topics help us to understand contents of articles or some experiences of my own. Secondly, we can improve our reading speed by predicting the following contents.

Thirdly, we can associate our knowledge concerning the topics and it can help us to make our learning much easier.

3. Finding key words in any text was an interesting technique. I think relying on key words is more helpful than relying on the structure in reading a text.

4. This time I really enjoy my reading. I could not imagine that I could understand a text without knowing the meaning of new words using contextual clues.

5. I no longer get bored with this task.

6. Now I actively involve in the topic I am reading about and it's really challenging to discuss about reading text specially when some of my classmates have opposite ideas or when you ask a question and make us choose between these two such as: Do you enjoy watching movies in the cinema or get a CD/DVD of that to watch at home? Do you prefer to keep your old friends or make new ones? and so forth.

7. I can regulate my own reading strategies and I am aware of my own responsibility in learning.

8. When you ask us some questions concerning the topic we really engaged in the text and I can remind what I learnt before.

9. Now I know how to learn efficiently and actively thinking about the topic is really fun.

Conclusion

The aim of this study is to investigate the impact of self-direction on learners' proficiency of reading comprehension, students' accomplishments, teachers' role in this area and suggesting some tips about learning strategies so that EFL learners can read different texts of not only their textbooks but also other sources like magazines, newspapers, etc to comprehend them effectively and efficiently without wasting their time by looking up every word in dictionary. Moreover, the long-term objective of the SDL is a life-long learning particularly in adult education.

A touchstone of effective learning is that students are in charge of their own learning; essentially, they direct their own learning processes. SDL enable learners to be efficient, active, motivated learners. They no longer get bored with this task. They set their own personal goals and pursue personal interests. But the problems arise when the teaching style is not matched to the learner's degree of self-direction and the students are not directed properly in the first stages of learning. On the other hand, it needs learners to collaborate with teacher.

The data analyzed through t-test indicates a significant difference between mean score of the two groups that confirms the great outperformance of students after treatment.

Implications and Further Research

In this study there are implications for:

a) English teachers to pay much more attention to learners' reading comprehension with regard to the value of the strategy training in the language classes to enable students to learn more efficiently and become autonomous learners. It may allow teachers to obtain an awareness of the likely problems to be incurred by the learners' lack of familiarity with such strategies. Furthermore, teachers can teach in more than one style.

b) Students to know how to carry out this task efficiently and independently. It can also assist learners to invent strategies of their own and use metacognitive strategies to monitor for their understanding of texts

This could be attributed to EFL/ESL learners both in local schools and English schools. SDL generally meets with active cooperation from students.

The main pedagogic aim underlying my proposal is that, upon the implementation of a new methodology to improve learners' reading comprehension, which combines self-directed strategies with metacognition focused tasks; students are expected to develop a highly acceptable comprehension competence to become self-regulate learners.

SDL has some other strategies not only in reading skill but also in other skills of learning English and any other languages and is applicable to other fields of study, so teachers can use any of these strategies interchangeably based on learner objectives. We suggest that the door is now open and there is a scope for the development of future research in this area with regard to other skills that have significant influence on the proficiency of EFL/ESL learners. Self-directed learning is the method used when a learner, rather than an institution, controls both the

learning objectives and the means of learning. It is a continuous process, often informal, and an important factor in lifelong learning. Many adults engage in self-directed learning to improve their work performance. Others carry on self-directed learning in recreational arts and hobbies, matters of health, family and community, or simply to increase their intellectual resources. Consequently, the scope of this research could be enlarged to investigate the other fields of education and even life.

The model may apply to less formal learning situations, it is directed to teachers, expressed in terms of "teachers" and "students," and was with educational institutions in mind.

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