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EFL Learners' Language Learning Strategy Use as a Predictor for Self-Directed Learning Readiness

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Self-directed learning has been viewed as the key to human survival and it has also been set as the ultimate goal of university education (Briggs, 1999; Knowles, 1975). Also in the field of language education, researchers have stated that learner's self-directed learning ability is the major goal in this field (Holec, 1981). Since language learning strategy is often seen as the tool for learners to exercise self-directed learning, and both language learning strategy and self-directed learning are proven to be significantly related to learner's learning achievement, the purpose of this study is to understand young adult EFL majors' self-directed learning readiness and their language learning strategy use, and further identify the best language learning strategy predictors for self-directed learning readiness. Findings of this study is hoped to serve as a reference for language educators and learners in cultivating successful self-directed language learners.

Key words: self-directed learning, adult education, language education, language learning strategy

BACKGROUND

The Ministry of Education in Taiwan (2006) has acknowledged promoting life-long learning and cultivating citizens' foreign language proficiency as two of the major objectives for national education development. To be able to

adopt learning as a lifelong mission, Su (2000) indicated that self-directed learning is the major means to achieve the goal. Early in the 1970s, Knowles (1975) has recognized self-directed learning as a key to the survival of individual and human race. Decades later, the concept of self-directed learning has taken on another level of meaning and importance as we live in a century characterized as knowledge explosion. Since it is less likely for individuals to stay and learn in the education system all their lifetime, helping students to become lifelong self-directed learners who can motivate and monitor their own learning process after formal school education has become an important task for many educators and teachers.

For second language educators and researchers, assisting students to become effective and self-directed language learners is also an important issue. One's language learning effectiveness, or achievement, can be influenced by many factors, such as language learning strategy use, language learning anxiety, language learning motivation, language learning beliefs, and so on (Dornyei, 1994; Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002; Osanai, 2000; Park, 1997; Wharton, 2000). But other than these factors, long-term and continuous investment of effort, determination, motivation and interest are also important elements of becoming a successful language learner. Holec (1981) combined the ideas of self-directed learning with language learning, and considered that learners' ability to take charge of his/her own learning is recognized as a major goal in the field of language education. Horwitz (1987) also indicated that a huge proportion of language learning occurs outside the classroom, and learner's ability of regulating his/her language learning outside the classroom is crucially important to his/her learning achievement. The ideas have been practiced in real life, and "many institutions have been experimenting with innovative language learning programs to this end. Some experimental programs have attempted to implement self-directed language learning in the classroom" (Gan, 2003, p. 3). Biggs (1999) even suggest that self-directed learning should be the ultimate goal of education, and especially for university education,

Even so, Gan (2003) has indicated that there is still not much

"systematically documented empirical research on whether, how, and why regular university EFL student self direct their language learning outside the classroom" (p. 3). It remains unclear that how "ready"/"prepared" the college students are to exercise self-directed learning. There has been even little research identifying the correlation between self-directed learning readiness and language learning strategy use, especially research focusing on the social context in Taiwan.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Self-directed Learning

Self-directed learning in different fields, especially in the fields of adult education and distance education, has been increasingly investigated in the latest few decades. Self-directed learning is considered as a process, a method, a personality characteristic, and a goal (Brockett & Hiemestra, 1991; Candy, 1991; Garrison, 1997; Grow, 1991).

The terms "self-directed learning" and "lifelong learner" are widely used in many educational policies and course objective settings. However, there has not been any clear definition on the terms. Many researchers have provided definitions of self-directed learning based on their own research and professionalism. The term "self-directed learning" was first provided by Tough (1966), and ever since then, numerous terms with similar meanings were provided, such as self-directed study, self-planned learning, independent study, self-study, self-education, autonomous learning, self-instruction, self-regulation, self-direction, and so on (Brockett & Hiemestra, 1991; Gerstner, 1992; Guglielmino, 1977; Tough, 1979). The most popularly recognized definition of self-directed learning is made by Knowles (1975); he stated that "self-directed learning describes a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help 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" (p. 18). Knowles (1975) believed that self-directed learning is one part of human nature; as people growing up, one would want to be in charge of one's own learning, and by making decisions on his/her own, one become responsible for his/her behavior. Guglielmino (1977) suggested that self-directed learning refers to a readiness to learning ways to confront or solve problems in life situation. Self-directed learning readiness indicates one's capacity to develop the skills to do self-directed learning, and it exists in each person to some degree.

Smith (1982) indicated that self-directed learning refers to that individual's ability to control his/her learning plan/schedule and other learning-related factors. Rogers (1983) indicated that self-directed learning is to learn or to choose in learner's free manner, and he took self-directed learning as the personal process of learning how to learn, how to change, and how to adapt. Self-directed learning was seen as the changes of learners' inner consciousness (Brookfield, 1986). Dickinson(1987) applied the term "self-direction" as the learner's attitude of taking responsibility in learning. Riley (1988) stated that self-directed learning is a process that learners construct and implement their own learning projects. Long (1994, p. 14) indicated that "SDL is frequently associated with goal setting, identification and selection of resources, and time management". In Long's self-directed learning theory (1989), he pointed out that there are three dimensions constructing adult self-directed learning, sociological dimension, educational dimension, and psychological dimension. By the interplay of these dimensions, learners develop different levels of self-directed learning, for example, learners with high educational control and low psychological control are low self-directed learning learners, and those with high psychological control and educational control are high self-directed learners. Later in his study, Long (1990) proposed his self-directed learning theory with four crucial elements: environment and information, learner, learning process, and learning results. He believed that to decide whether a learning activity is self-directed, these elements need to be considered. Long emphasized that learner's self mental

control is the core concept of this self-directed learning theory.

By the 90s, Grow (1991) proposed "the staged self-directed learning model" (SDLL), and defined self-directed learning as the level that learners can make decision or have choices in teaching and learning situations. In his staged self—directed learning theory, he identified the roles of students (from independent to self-directed) and the roles of teachers (from instructor to counselor) in the distinct four stages. According to Candy (1991), self-directed learning is one of the most common ways in which adults pursue learning. It is also an end of lifelong education. Candy (1991) believed that competence, resource, power are the three crucial elements to stimulate self-directed learning. Holec (1981, 1996) took self-direction as the mode, situation, or technique of learning. He further explained that "self-directed learning situations range from those in which the learner benefits, on demand, for more or less substantial technical assistance… to those which are completely self-taught" (1996, p. 21). Biggs (1999) proposed three important skills for self-directed learning including generic study skills for time managing and organizing, study skills for learning specific content knowledge, and meta-cognitive learning skills for handling new situation without others' direction and assistance.

Self-directed learning readiness was found to be positively correlated to students' academic performances in various educational settings (Long & Morris, 1996). Darmayanti (1993) reported similar findings in her research. She found a positive correlation between students' self-directed learning readiness and their GPA scores. Later in Anderson's (1993) study of college distance learning course, and Harriman's (1990) study of community college distance course, the correlation between students' achievement and their self-directed learning readiness was confirmed and supported.

In the field of language learning, self-direction is explained as learner's strategic and attitudinal traits that a learner is able, or going to be able to, make informed decisions related to his language learning tasks under the assumption of taking his/her own learning responsibility in a free and willing manner (Tudor, 1996). Wenden (1998) suggested that planning, monitoring

and evaluating are the skills for constituting self-directed language learning. Littlewood (1997) has indicated that in order for student learners to become autonomous learners, they need two elements; one is the willingness and motivation to engage in the task; the other is the ability to know "how" to engage in the task. In regard to the ability of knowing "how-to", Snow (2006) suggested that "…it is not safe to assume that students have some inherent instinct that guides them into effective language learning. In particular, it is not safe to assume that students - even experienced language learners - have all the necessary skills for autonomous language learning." To help language learners become effective language learners and make use of different learning strategies to learn and monitor their own inside and outside of the classroom, guidance from teachers are crucial.

Language Learning Strategy

Studies in the field of language learning strategy can be traced back to the 1970s when Rubin (1975) and Bialystok (1978) started their work focusing on the definition of strategy. After that, though many researchers had developed their own definitions, it was not specific enough until Oxford (1990) provided her definition of learning strategies. She states "learning strategies are specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (p. 8). Based on this definition, language learning strategies are specific actions, behaviors, steps or techniques that learners use in order to help the result of their learning in inputting, comprehending, and outputting the target language. Oxford (1990) also proposed that language learning strategies could be divided into two categories: direct strategies and indirect strategies. Direct strategies include memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies, while indirect strategies include metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies. She believed that applying appropriate language learning strategies on learning tasks could help learners gain self-confidence and

improved proficiency, and which would lead to high motivation in language learning.

Many existing studies have confirmed the significant relationship between proficiency and language learning strategy use. Phillips (1991) used SILL and TOEFL scores to investigate the relationship between adult ESL students' language learning strategies and proficiency, and reported a significant relationship between ESL/EFL SILL frequencies and English proficiency levels. Park (1997) investigated the relationship between language learning strategies and L2 proficiency of Korean University students. He reported a linear relationship between language learning strategy use and L2 proficiency. All six categories of language learning strategies in SILL were significantly correlated with the TOEFL scores, and among the six categories, cognitive and social strategies were most predictive of Korean university students' TOEFL scores.

In Osanai's (2000) study of 147 foreign students in universities in the United States, he found self-rating proficiency was significantly correlated to the use of language learning strategies. Wharton (2000) reported that university students who rated their proficiency as "good" and "fair" use more SILL strategies significantly more often than those who rated their proficiency as "poor". He further concluded "… a linear relationship between proficiency level and the reported frequency of use of many strategies" (p. 231) and "[t]he relationship is two way, however, with proficiency affecting strategy use and vice versa" (p. 232).

In summary, basing on the existing literature, it is clear that learners' self-directed learning and language learning strategy use are both related to learners' language learning achievement. However, little empirical research focusing on the relationship between self-directed learning and language learning strategy use is found. The present research study intends to understand the young adult EFL learners' self-directed learning readiness, language learning strategy use, and the relationship between them. If possible, this study further seeks for the best language learning strategy predictors for learners' self-directed learning readiness. This study presents an attempt to

advance the body of literature in the field of foreign language learning education.

THE STUDY

Research Purpose

The overarching purpose of this study is to develop a thorough understanding of young adult EFL majors' self-directed learning readiness and their language learning strategy use. This study is also expected to identify the best language learning strategy (LLS) predictors for self-directed learning readiness (SDL). By doing so, the researcher hopes to contribute to pedagogical achievement in the field of language teaching and learning. It is hoped that the findings of this study can serve as reference for educators and learners in the field of language learning to monitor and review their foreign language education, and to look for advancement and improvement in cultivating and preparing good-skilled, well-trained, and self-directed lifelong learners in the society.

Research Questions

Basing on the research purpose, the study is focused to answer the following questions:

1. What is young adult EFL learners' self-directed learning readiness?
2. What is young adult EFL learners' language learning strategy use?
3. What is the relationship between young adult EFL learners' self-directed learning readiness and language learning strategy use?
4. Which language learning strategy categories are the most effective predictors of young adult EFL learners' self-directed learning readiness?

Methodology

The designed research survey employs both quantitative and qualitative methods, mainly quantitative. A set of three questionnaires were used to obtained the data needed: the background information questionnaire, Self-Directed Learning Readiness Questionnaire (SDLR) (Deng, 1992), and Strategy inventory of Language Learning (SILL) (Oxford, 1990). SDLRS has been applied in numerous setting and researches and it is probed to have high reliability and content validity (Deng, 1992). It consists of 55 items, and six factors of self-directed learning have been identified: efficiency of learning, enjoyment of learning, learning motivation, active learning, independent learning, and creative learning. The Cronbach alpha values assessed were .78 for efficiency of learning, .85 for enjoyment of learning, .75 for learning motivation, .64 for active learning, .83 for independent learning, and .72 for creative learning. Moreover, SILL consists of 50 close-ended questions with the five-point Likert scale rage from 1 to 5 for answering. Considerable evidences show that SILL is valid and reliable (Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995). The reliability of SILL, as assessed by Cronbach alpha for internal consistency, was .9444. The participants' language learning achievement is evaluated via a simulated standardized test, medium-advanced level GEPT. The quantitative data obtained was analyzed with SPSS statistical program. After the analysis, interviews were carried out in order to obtain further information regarding certain statistical result.

The target population in this study is 110 EFL major college students in Taiwan. Although there were 99 females and only 11males, the sample subjects still represent the population well due to that it is a very common situation in Taiwan that female students outnumber male students in language related departments in universities. All subjects received a nine-year compulsory education (elementary and junior high) and three-year senior high education. EFL education is integrated in at least six-year high school education. Cluster sampling is applied in this study in order to obtain the appropriate sample that can best represent the population. The sets of

questionnaires with detailed instruction and explanation were distributed to the sample subjects during the semester. Collected data were coded and analyzed. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, means, standard deviation and percentages, and inferential statistics, including ANOVA, bivariate correlation and multiple regressions, were performed to answer the research questions. The standard for significance in this study is $p<.05$.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Self-directed Learning Readiness

Table 1 shows that the mean self-directed learning score of all participants was 3.33 with a standard deviation of 0.59. It indicated that the participants had a medium to high level of self-directed learning readiness. As presented in Table 1, mean scores of all self-directed learning categories fell in the ranges of 2.5-3.4 (medium level), and 3.5-5.0 (high level). The participants reported the highest level of self-directed learning in the category of enjoyment of learning (M=3.75, SD=.47), and the lowest level in the category of efficiency of learning (M=2.94, SD=.59).

It shows that college EFL major students have reached certain level of self-directed learning readiness, and the ultimate goal of university education, cultivating self-directed learner (Biggs, 1999) has been achieved. It implies learners' desire to actively participate in their own language learning. Students are able to take charge of their own learning. They can enjoy learning, and even motivate themselves to pursue further knowledge. It is shown in the findings that the students have the ability to exercise independent learning; they are able to learn without the help of others. This finding challenges the stereotypical notion that Asian learners tend to be passive and dependent.

Students reported to have lower scores in creative learning and efficiency of learning. One possible explanation is culture and education system in

Taiwan. In this social context, creativity is not always encouraged. Students are usually required, by their teachers and parents, to follow instruction, to integrate into the larger group, and to not to be different from others. Their creativity has not been emphasized or even encouraged, ever since they were very young. As to efficiency of learning, a follow-up interviews were conducted with a few subjects trying to figure out the reason why they had low scores in this category. Students indicated that besides the time they spent learning in class, most of their learning happened involving computers and internet. Almost all of their assigned projects or papers need to be done with computers, and to complete their projects or papers, they were frequently required to go online and search for information. While they were online, trying to do something for their projects or papers, they tended to check their e-mails, log on to their instant messenger account, and/or take a look at their or friends' blog. Thus, even though they meant to exercise learning, or learning-related activities in the beginning, they usually got distracted by many other activities or started chatting with friends online, and in the end, they became too exhausted to focus on their learning. Moreover, students also indicated that sometimes, even though they know they need to accomplish certain assignment, they just do not feel like to do it, or do not know where to begin with the assignment. They lack of the motivation to finish their assignment efficiently. All these could be a good explanation for the low scores in efficiency of learning. Teachers might need to take this into consideration when assigning projects and/or papers. The detailed interview extracts are as follows:

> Student A: "When I use the computer to write my assignments, I also log on to MSN (Windows Live Messenger).Then if my friends see me on-line, they will send me messages…then I forget the time…and then forget to finish my assignments."

> Student B: "I can't help myself from visiting my friends' blogs when I use the computer to do my homework. For example, sometimes when I do my writing assignment, I need to look up some resources on line…and for some unknown reasons, I always end up visiting their blogs, looking at

their albums, reading their articles and giving them comments."

Student C: "I really want to finish my work efficiently, too. But I live with two roommates and sometimes I get distracted by them…for example, when one of them say he's hungry and wants to get something to eat, the rest of us get affected, too. Then we all end up eating, chatting, doing nothing".

Student D: "When my classmates say they want to go for a ride at night, I often couldn't resist the temptation and go out with them. I enjoy hanging out with them. And since they haven't done their assignments, either, I feel much better not finishing mine."

Student E: "Some of the assignments are really difficult. I don't know where to begin, so I just sit in front of my computer and do something else. Leave it there till the last minute".

Student F: "I just don't know how to do my assignment. I am worried that I won't be able to get a good grade. And the more I think about it, the more reluctant I am to finish it".

Student G: "Sometimes the directions given by teachers are not clear enough, and I don't know what to follow. I worry that if I do it my way, I might not get good grades. So I put it off till some other classmates finished it and then I can borrow theirs as an example".

Student H: "There are too much things going on in my life. I have a part time job, and when I get off of work, I just feel tired and want to rest. I don't have the energy to bring myself to finish the school work I am supposed to do".

TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics of Self-directed Learning Readiness

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Rank	Level
Efficiency of learning	110	2.94	.59	6	M
Enjoyment of learning	110	3.75	.47	1	H
Learning motivation	110	3.55	.68	2	H
Active learning	110	3.37	.53	4	M-H

Independent learning	110	3.44	.50	3	M-H
Creative learning	110	3.24	.65	5	M
Total self-directed learning	110	3.33	.39		M-H

Language Learning Strategy Use

Table 2 displays the subjects' language learning strategy use. Overall, the participants used language learning strategy in a medium to high level (M=3.16, SD=.46). They also reported that while learning English, they used cognitive strategy (M=3.30, SD=.62) the most frequently, and memory strategy (M=2.96, SD=0.57) the least.

This finding is consistent with that in Park's (1997) study. He investigated Korean university students' language learning *strategies* strategies and English proficiency and found that cognitive strategies were used more frequently by the students. However, Yang (2007) reported that the preferred strategy category by both aboriginal and non-aboriginal junior college students in Taiwan was compensation strategy, followed by the social strategy then cognitive strategy. Yang also indicated that the least preferred strategy of Taiwanese junior college students was memory strategy, which is corresponding with the finding in this study. Moreover, Griffiths and Parr (2001) conducted a study to find out the most frequently used learning strategies by language learners. Results of their study showed that social strategies were the most frequently used strategies while the memory strategies were the least used.

According to Oxford (1990), cognitive strategy enables students to approach, comprehend, and use the language in different ways. Learners who adopt cognitive strategies are more likely to consciously monitor or supervise their learning process and apply different ways to help them understand. This indicate that students subjects were able to "think about their own thinking" and they consciously paid attention to their learning process. While most Taiwanese EFL students were raised and brought up in a test-oriented education environment in which memorizing text content and cramming information was often assumed to be the most commonly used strategy,

results of this study indicated that students didn't adopt memory strategy frequently. One possible explanation is that as students enter college, the new learning context in which they are in might require them to use other strategies more than memory strategies. In addition to paper and pencil testing, they might also need to do oral presentations, collaboration work with peers, or other forms of projects which might involve them in a higher level of thinking process. Unlike testing, they need to seek information, organize tasks, plan their time, coordinate/cooperate with peers, monitor and reflect their own learning process. Consequently, students might need a variety of learning strategies other than memory strategy to help them deal with the different forms of assignments and assessments given in class.

TABLE 2
Descriptive Statistics of Language Learning Strategy Use

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Rank	Level
Memory strategy	110	2.96	.57	6	M
Cognitive strategy	110	3.30	.62	1	M-H
Compensation strategy	110	3.14	.45	4	M-H
Metacognitive strategy	110	3.28	.59	2	M-H
Affective strategy	110	3.02	.59	5	M
Social strategy	110	3.18	.62	3	M-H
Total language learning strategy	110	3.16	.46		M-H

Correlation of SDL and LLS

It is found that learners' self-directed learning readiness and their language learning strategy use are significantly highly correlated ($p<.01$, $r=.705$). The six self-directed learning categories are also found to be significantly correlated with the six language learning strategy categories. All the correlations are found to be positive, which means that the more language learning strategies the students use, the higher their self-directed learning readiness is. However, the causality between self-directed learning readiness and language learning strategy is not defined.

Gan (2004) reported a similar finding. He examined the relationships of

self-directed language learning attitudes, strategies and achievement of Chinese EFL students, and reported that students who were confident and self-directed were more likely to report the use of a variety of learning strategies. Gan also concluded that "…helping students foster positive attitudes and/ or beliefs may lead to more use of these strategies."

TABLE 3
Correlation Coefficients among SDL Categories and LLS Categories

	SDL	SDL-	SDL-lov	SDL-	SDL-act	SDL-ind	SDL-cre	LLS	LLS-	LLS-cog	LLS-	LLS-	LLS-aff	LLS-
SDL	1.00													
SDL-effi	.796**	1.00												
SDL-lov	.668**	.317**	1.00											
SDL-mot	.847**	.561**	.667**	1.00										
SDL-act	.788**	.671**	.360**	.614**	1.00									
SDL-ind	.580**	.412**	.103	.372**	.350**	1.00								
SDL-cre	.635**	.424**	.508**	.591**	.433**	.171	1.00							
LLS	.705**	.657**	.425**	.578**	.606**	.366*	.440**	1.00						
LLS-mem	.487**	.548**	.219**	.447**	.447**	.195*	.307**	.746**	1.00					
LLS-cog	.580**	.528**	.380**	.429**	.426**	.400**	.298**	.863**	.538**	1.00				
LLS-com	.440**	.362**	.268**	.334**	.417**	.219*	.341**	.689**	.426**	.559**	1.00			
LLS-met	.667**	.618**	.406**	.570**	.583**	.339**	.362**	.867**	.604**	.663**	.448**	1.00		

LLS-aff	.599**	.524**	.393**	.507**	.521**	.237*	.424**	.753**	.442**	.558**	.487**	.663**	1.00
LLS-soc	.611**	.562**	.319**	.514**	.516**	.307**	.504**	.772**	.492**	.572**	.493**	.668**	.558**	1.00

**correlations are significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).
*correlations are significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

Language Learning Strategy used to Predict Self-Directed Learning Readiness

A stepwise multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the most effective language learning strategy predictors of self-directed learning readiness. The six categories of language learning strategies was specified as the independent variables (predictors), with the students overall self-directed learning readiness as the dependent variable (criterion). The results of the stepwise regression model are presented in Table 4.

For a regression model, four assumptions should be examined: normal distribution of the dependent variable, linearity, independence of scores, and homoscedasticity (Green, Salkind, & Akey, 2000). The data set was first examined for multicollinearity, the intercorrelations among the predictor variables. Despite the significant correlations among the six categories of language learning strategy, the variance inflations factors (VIFs) of these categories were found within an acceptable range (1.863~2.320). These small VIF values imply that no variables should be deleted from the regression model for multicollinearity consideration (Stevens, 1992). Normality, linearity and homoscedasticity were checked with the normal probability plot, the scatter plots of dependent and independent variables, and the scatter plots of residuals (Y-Y′) against the predicted self-directed learning readiness (Y′). The result indicates that the assumptions were met for the regression model.

The regression model implied that a combination of three language learning strategy variables (metacognitive strategy, social strategy, and affective strategy) was significantly correlated with self-directed learning readiness (R^2=.523, F (3, 106) = 38.678, p=.000). The multiple regression

analysis using the least squares solution yielded the following equation:

$$Y= 1.619 + 0.229 (X_1) + 0.158 (X_2) + 0.150 (X_3)$$

When Y represents the predicted self-directed learning readiness, X_1 refers to metacognitive strategy, X_2 refers to social strategy and X_3 is affective social strategy. Approximately 52% of the self-directed learning readiness variance can be accounted for by the combination of metacognitive strategy, social strategy and affective strategy.

The three language learning strategy categories that can be used to predict self-directed learning readiness belong to indirect strategy group. According to Oxford (1990), indirect strategies are strategies that do not work with the language itself, but "support and manage language learning without (in many instances) directly involving the target language" (p. 135). Metacognitive strategy is related to learner's control of their own cognition; learners use metacognitive strategy to coordinate their language learning process. Social strategy is about learning the target language through interaction with others. Affective strategy refers to learner's regulation of their own emotion, attitude and motivation of language learning. Basing on the result shown in Table 4, metacognitive strategy alone could explain 44% of the self-directed learning readiness variance, and metacognitive strategy combined with social strategy and affective strategy could explain 52% of the self-directed learning readiness variance. One possible explanation is that indirect strategies are more applicable to other learning situations than direct strategies. Direct language learning strategies mainly deal with the target language itself, and have no significant influence on self-directed learning readiness. Indirect strategies, on the other hand, involves mostly about the learning process, are not limited in language learning. With indirect strategies, learners get to plan their learning, set goals, monitor and evaluate their learning, control their emotion and direct their attitude during the learning process, and benefit from cooperating and interacting with others. These skills are helpful in almost any learning situations. If students are able to coordinate their language learning

process well, they tend to be ready or prepared, to exercise self-directed learning. However, this study is only an exploratory one, further studies with different subjects, in different learning settings, are expected.

TABLE 4
Stepwise Multiple Regression: Language Learning Strategy Categories to Predict Self-Directed Learning Readiness

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square
1	.667[a]	.445	.440
2	.703[b]	.495	.485
3	.723[c]	.523	.509

a. Predictors: (constant), metacognitive strategy
b. Predictors: (constant), metacognitive strategy, social strategy
c. Predictors: (constant), metacognitive strategy, social strategy, affective strategy

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The study was set out to develop a thorough understanding of young adult EFL majors' self-directed learning readiness and their language learning strategy use. Several findings were generated from the results. First of all, regarding students' level of self-directed learning readiness, results showed that EFL major students in Ming Chuan University have reached a medium to high level of self-directed learning readiness (M=3.33, SD=.59), suggesting that students were able to motivate and monitor their own learning process to a certain extent. Secondly, in answering the second research question to find out students' language learning strategy use, results also indicated that students have a medium to high level of language learning strategy use (M=3.16, SD=.46), which shows that students are capable of using strategies to help them acquire their target language. The majority of students used the cognitive strategy the most, and the memory strategy the least, and this corresponds with many previous literature (e.g., Griffiths & Parr, 2001; Park, 1997; Yang, 2007). When investigating the relationship between students' learning strategy use and students' self-directed learning readiness, the third finding found from the study revealed a positive correlation between

students' strategy use and self-directed learning readiness. This showed the important role learning strategies could have in supporting students to become self-directed learner. The more strategies they are able to apply to their learning, the more self-directed they could become. The last finding emerged from the study showed that among the three learning strategy categories, indirect strategy group which includes metacognitive strategy, social strategy and affective strategy can be used to predict students self-directed learning readiness. As indicated by Thanasoulas (2000), "autonomous learning is achieved [only] when certain conditions obtain: cognitive and metacognitive strategies on the part of the learner, motivation, attitudes, and knowledge about language learning, i.e., a kind of metalanguage".

Based on the above findings, this study may have a few implications for teachers and students in Taiwan. First of all, there exist a strong correlation between language learning strategies and self-directed learning readiness. In order to help students develop learner autonomy, creating a curriculum which supports learner autonomy becomes crucially important. Besides training students' ability in the four language skills and teaching content knowledge and linguistic structures, teachers also need to encourage and give students the skills and learning strategies to learn on their own (Thanasoulas, 2000). Students will need teachers to guide them, so they know what kind of learning strategies are effective for their learning. As indicated by Snow (2006), if teachers do not give students appropriate guidance, often times students may "waste a lot of time through the use of ineffective strategies, and eventually come to the conclusion that autonomous approaches simply don't work".

Second, developing students' self-directed learning takes a long-term effort; after all, students in Taiwan are used to being passive learners who have long been accustomed to taking orders from teachers in a classroom setting. Chinese culture has also taught students to respect and obey teachers' guidance and orders. Since old habits die hard, a coherent and consistent curriculum should be developed to foster students' awareness of self-directed learning. But more important than that, teachers also need to recognize the

change of teachers' role in the process. Fostering the concept of self-directed learning upon students requires teachers' acknowledgement of the shift of responsibility from teachers to students. The traditional teacher-centered classroom settings should be transformed into a context that allows room to support students to learn independently and solve problems on their own, so that they can learn to be responsible for their own learning.

This study investigated young adult EFL majors' self-directed learning readiness and their language learning strategy use. A few limitations, however, will need to be taken into account when interpreting the results. First of all, the study only investigated students' language learning strategy use, self-directed learning readiness and the relationship in between. More studies, however, will be needed to find out what kind of curriculum and course planning could enhance and foster students' use of learning strategy and self-directed learning. Second, the student subjects in this study are mainly from the same department in the same school; thus, to be able to generalize the results to a wider population, a larger scope of subjects should be included for future study.

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