

## **Teachers' Practices in Encouraging Self Directedness in Learning English as a Second Language**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The development of self-directed language learning needs to be seen not only from the point of view of the learners, but also from the perspective of the teachers. Teachers play a critical role in encouraging self-directedness and it is important to examine how they may or may not, either directly or indirectly, create opportunities to encourage self-directedness amongst their students. Although many teachers acknowledge the benefits of self-directedness, lessons in the classroom still tend to be teacher-centered. In this study, several English language teachers at a public tertiary level institution were observed over a period of two weeks to determine the extent they used techniques that encourage self-directedness. An observation checklist based on the four stages of the Staged levels of Self-Directedness model (Grow, 1991) was used. Instances of when self-directedness was supported were also noted together with when opportunities to do so were missed. It was generally found that although practices that encouraged self-directedness were observed, teachers often missed opportunities to do so in the classroom. There were also few instances of practices that reflected the higher levels in Grow's model, indicating that teachers were either hesitant or unable to practise student self-directedness in the classrooms.

*Keywords:* Language learning, language teaching, self-directed learning, staged self-directed learning (SSDL)

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In today's higher education landscape, students are expected to play active and participatory roles in the learning process while teachers act as facilitators to motivate and guide them to acquire strategies needed for self-directed learning (Koçak, 2003). According to Knowles (1975), self-directed

learning (SDL) is a process where the learner takes the initiative to discover his or her needs during the process of learning, sets learning objectives, identifies resources, adopts suitable learning strategies and evaluates the outcomes of learning. In order to be successful in this process, the learner must have the correct attitudes, personality characteristics, abilities and motivational level (Littlewood, 1999; Wiley, 1983).

While classroom teaching in the Asia-Pacific region is sometimes perceived as being traditional, largely teacher-led, and occurring in a passive learning environment (Fatima & Ahmad, 2013), educational reform in many of the countries in the region now see an emphasis on the development of self-directed and autonomous learning skills. In Malaysia, for example, The Malaysian Ministry of Education, in its National Education Policy Blueprint (2013-2025) has expressed strong encouragement towards the development of independent and life-long learning skills among students (Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025). Educational practices that are in line with this focus on learner autonomy such as school based assessment and student portfolios are also being implemented in the country (for example, see Singh & Samad, 2013) to slowly reduce the impact of standardized national examinations on teaching and learning. Central to such a new direction are the teachers who must now adopt and implement relevant activities that involve critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving to allow students to develop a sense of responsibility for their own

growth. Some of these activities include searching for information, and commenting on or sharing information (Shahin & Tork, 2013). Despite this awareness of their roles, there are still concerns that teachers are either not doing enough to encourage self-directedness among their learners or lack the skills to do so. Hiemstra (2013), for example, noted that “numerous teachers, including instructors of adults, still rely primarily on teacher-directed approaches and fail to tap into that SDL potential among their students” (p. 23). Similarly, a study by Shien and Akiko (2009) indicated that teachers’ teaching methods, when not congruent with students’ true needs and expectations, could to some extent, hinder students from developing a greater degree of autonomy in language learning. There is therefore a need for direct observation of what actually occurs in the classroom and whether the teachers’ practices encourage self-directedness.

In this study, four language teachers in a Malaysian university were observed to identify the kinds of activities that they conducted in the classrooms and whether their instructional practices encouraged self-directedness among their students. The Staged Self-Directed Learning model of Grow (1991), which consists of four stages, was used in order to examine the three major research questions for the study which are stated as follows:

1. Do teachers use practices that can encourage self-directedness of their students, and if so, do the use of

these practices reflect the stages of self-directedness?

2. What are some examples of the specific practices that the teachers use as observed in the lessons?
3. What are some missed opportunities for teachers to encourage self-directedness as observed in the lessons?

This paper is part of a larger study that also consists of a postgraduate student's study on students' readiness for self-directed learning in English as a Second Language (Xuan, 2017).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Self-directedness in learners can generally be considered as a learning inclination that is formed through the combination of specific attitudes, relevant abilities and appropriate support from relevant sources. It does not preclude the role of the teacher, but rather requires the teacher to take up new roles in the classroom. In second language teaching and learning, self-directedness among learners is a prized characteristic, given that learning a language requires much intrinsic motivation. Motivation is often seen as a prerequisite factor that influences the extent to which learners are ready to engage in self-directed learning, and teachers may have to develop student motivation before they can effectively train them to become self-directed (Spratt et al., 2002). Wolters (2003) further argued that self-directedness make learners become more intrinsically motivated, requiring less motivation from

external factors such as rewards, scores or threats. Encouraging intrinsic motivation is especially important in learning the English language in Malaysia as many studies indicate that Malaysian students are more extrinsically motivated (Bidin et al., 2009; Zubairi & Sarudin, 2009). Another benefit that has been noted is that self-directedness can be a predictor of academic success (see for e.g. Khodabandehlou et al., 2012; Mahdavinia & Nabatchi, 2011; Mohamadpour, 2013; Shien & Akiko, 2009).

Culture exerts a strong influence on the effective implementation of self-directed learning in classrooms. In their study, Guglielmino and Guglielmino (2011) showed the positive relationship between societies that favour individualism over collectivism and the extent of self-directed learning. Similarly, Frambach et al. (2012) indicated that self-directed learning is related to cultural as well as educational backgrounds. In their study comparing students from three cultures, they found that students from non-western cultures expressed "feelings of uncertainty about the independence required in self-directed learning, a focus on tradition that impeded the uptake of a new approach to learning, a dependence on hierarchical sources rather than oneself or one's motivation to learn." (Frambach et al., 2012, p. 744). Other factors such as a teacher-centred secondary education and an examination oriented outlook were also cited as an example of how educational experiences may influence acceptance towards self-directed learning. Amirkhiz et al. (2013) also

showed how culture played a role in how quickly students could become self-directed in their comparison between Iranian and Malaysian culture. They concluded that the “collectivist orientation is tangibly stronger among Malaysian participants than among their Iranian counterparts” (Amirkhiz et al., 2013, p. 271) and that unsuccessful attempts to implement innovative approaches to teaching and learning could be blamed on “insensitivity to the cultural and contextual exigencies” (Amirkhiz et al., 2013, p. 276) of the learning settings.

Two learning theories – humanism and constructivism - directly support self-directedness among learners and provide insights on how teachers can develop this trait among learners. Humanistic education is largely based on the belief that “learners should have a say in what they should be learning and how they should learn it, and reflects the notion that education should be concerned with the development of autonomy in the learner” (Nunan, 1988, p. 20). Besides having a significant influence on language teaching and communicative activities (see for example Wenden, 1991), the humanistic movement also provides strong encouragement for teachers to promote learner autonomy in the classroom. In this learning theory, teachers are encouraged to show respect to the learner and value the learner; to view learning as a form of self-realization and self-actualisation; to offer learners a large number of opportunities in the decision making process, and to play the role of facilitator in the classroom. Within this learning tradition, Koçak (2003) also argued that autonomous learners should also

be taught and expected to use metacognitive strategies such as self-monitoring and self-evaluation in order to become more autonomous. In addition to humanism, constructivism is a second learning theory that supports learner centeredness. Constructivism refers to a situation where, “learners actively construct knowledge by integrating new information and experiences into what they have previously come to understand, revising and reinterpreting old knowledge in order to reconcile it with the new” (Kerka, 1997, p. 1). As this learning paradigm proposes that learning is a search for meaning, instructors can support students’ learning by asking relevant questions, listening to students’ needs, and creating environments that allow students to make choices that reinforce the overall goals for courses (Reeve, 2009).

The Staged Self-Directed Learning Model “proposes that learners advance through stages of increasing self-direction and that teachers can help or hinder that development” (Grow, 1991, p. 125). Grow argues that this model is based on the Situational Leadership model of Hersey and Blanchard (1988) and that progression through each stage of the model is encouraged through the use of pedagogical practices that accurately matches characteristics of self-directedness of the teacher with those of the learners.

In the four staged model, teachers who encourage self-directedness can be described as an authority or coach at the lowest level (stage 1) to a motivator or guide, a facilitator and finally a consultant or delegator at the highest level (stage 4).

Similarly, the student or learner progresses along the stages of self-directedness from being dependent to interested, involved and finally self-directed. The characteristics of both the teacher and the learner are represented in Table 1 which is taken from Grow (1991).

Table 1 also describes examples of teaching practices that would normally and most appropriately be used for each stage, ranging from coaching with immediate feedback at the lowest stage of self-directedness to internship at the highest stage.

Table 1  
*The staged self-directed learning model*

| Stage   | Student       | Teacher               | Examples  |
|---------|---------------|-----------------------|---|
| Stage 1 | Dependent     | Authority, coach      | Coaching with immediate feedback, Drill. Informational lecture. Overcoming deficiencies and resistance. |
| Stage 2 | Interested    | Motivator, guide      | Inspiring lecture plus guided discussion. Goal-setting and learning strategies.                         |
| Stage 3 | Involved      | Facilitator           | Discussion facilitated by teacher who participates as equal. Seminar. Group projects.                   |
| Stage 4 | Self-directed | Consultant, delegator | Internship, dissertation, individual work or self-directed study-group.                                 |

Source: Grow (1991)

Grow (1991) argued that the best teaching-learning situation that can promote self-directed learning was when there was a match between the student and teacher characteristics as indicated at each stage. Hence, a dependent student at stage 1 can be slowly led to become more self-directed if taught by a teacher authority or coach, provided of course, if both teacher and student share the same desire regarding wanting to promote student self-directedness. The types of activities used in the classroom should similarly be appropriate for the level as indicated in Table 1. Alternatively, the biggest mismatch that hinders progression in self-directedness occurs when either a student at stage 1 is taught by a teacher with stage 4 characteristics or a student at stage 4

is being taught by a teacher with stage 1 characteristics. It is therefore apparent in this model that a teacher's characteristics as well as his actions and activities in the classroom are central to the development of self-directedness among students.

Research on the role of the teacher in promoting self-directedness has been less frequently conducted compared to those that focus on the learner. When conducted, these studies most often use interviews to obtain teacher opinions regarding self-directed learning (Hiemstra, 2013; Nasri, 2017). While instructor comments regarding self-directedness are generally positive, Hiemstra (2013) argued that classroom practice remained largely teacher led. Studies on self-directedness that employ classroom observations as data collection

techniques are therefore needed to help provide greater insight into the actual practices in the classroom, including episodes where opportunities to encourage self-directedness were either exploited or missed.

## **METHODS**

A qualitative research design, consisting of observations and an observation checklist with observation notes was used for this study. The following sub sections describe the research context, participants, instruments, as well as data collection procedures and analysis used in the study.

### **Research Context and Participants**

The study was conducted at a public university in Malaysia. The respondents were four English language teachers teaching an English language course that focused on academic reading comprehension skills. Each respondent was observed teaching over a two-week period during the semester. Three of the four teachers were female and while three had at least five years of teaching experience; the fourth had been a teacher for only about two years. In this study, the respondents would be referred to by pseudonyms in order to protect their identities. Their pseudonyms, however, would indicate their gender. Hence, Rose was a young novice teacher; Jasmine and Julia had both taught for more than five years at the institution, while Reza was new to the institution but had taught for several years at a different institution. All teachers were trained as English language

teachers with three holding first degrees in teaching English and the fourth holding a Master's degree. Their students were from the foundation programme of the university and were all required to take the class as part of their English language academic programme requirements. The students can all be considered of intermediate proficiency in the English language based on their performance on the Malaysian University English Test (MUET), which is a prerequisite entrance examination in applying for admissions into public universities and colleges. The age of the students in the study was between 18 to 19 years old. Academically, they can be considered as being above average.

### **Research Instruments**

The researchers developed an observation checklist (see Appendix A) based on the staged levels of self-directed learning proposed by Grow (1991). This model contained four progressive levels of self-directed learning demonstrated by teachers – i.e. coaching, motivating, facilitating and delegating – and statements were written for each level of the model. Instruments used in other studies on self-directed learning such as the Learner Autonomy Readiness Instrument (LARI) from Koçak (2003); Self-Rating Scales of Self-Directed Learning (SRSSDL) from Williamson (2007); Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale (SDLRS) from Stewart (2007) and Yan (2007) were also referred to in order to finalize the list of statements eventually used in the checklist. The observation

checklist contained 22 statements that described teacher actions that represented the four stages of self-directed learning with 6 statements each for the first two stages (coaching and motivating) and 5 statements each for the other two stages (facilitating and delegating). The checklist was used to indicate whether or not the teachers demonstrated the actions in their teaching as described in the statements. A third option to indicate that the actions were only partially done was also included. Description of other forms of teacher action that reflected each stage was also allowed and overall comments could also be made by researchers in the observation checklist. In order to ensure a degree of reliability among the four observers, prior to the actual observations in the study, the researchers used the checklist when observing a teacher and later discussed how they each completed the checklist.

#### **Data Collection Procedure and Data Analysis**

Researchers were non-participant observers during the lessons and sat at the back of the classroom to complete the observation checklist and take relevant notes during the lesson. Three observations of each teacher were conducted over a period of 10 days with each observation lasting approximately 30 minutes. Of special interest was whether the statements that described practice reflecting each stage of the Staged Self-Directed Learning model were observed during the lessons. The number of statements for each stage and each teacher that were recorded as Y (for present), N (absent), and P (partially

present) were then counted and tabulated. Comments regarding teacher practice made by the four observers were also recorded in order to note and provide examples of how self-directedness was encouraged in the classroom or how the teachers failed to exploit opportunities to encourage self-directedness among their students.

#### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The results of the study are provided and discussed in the following three sub-sections that correspond to the research questions posed at the beginning of this paper.

##### **Responses to the Statements in the Check-List**

The results based on the observation checklist are presented in Table 2.

The results in Table 2 are interesting in several ways. Firstly, it can be observed that the actions that were most often observed were those that characterized the coaching characteristic (59 observations), followed by the motivating (29), facilitating (19) and delegating (2) characteristics of teachers. This observation corresponds to the four stages in the Staged Self-Directed Learning model as it should be expected that more actions in the early stage of model would be observed compared to the fourth and final stage of delegating. Thus, the results seem to validate the notion of a progressive or staged development in Self-Directed Learning.

Secondly, the frequency of affirmative responses to statements changes over the period of the three observations (O1, O2 and

Table 2  
*Responses to statements according to stage and observation*

| Respondent |    | 1. Coaching |   |   | 2. Motivating |    |    | 3. Facilitating |   |    | 4. Delegating |   |    |
|------------|----|-------------|---|---|---------------|----|----|-----------------|---|----|---------------|---|----|
|            |    | Y           | P | N | Y             | P  | N  | Y               | P | N  | Y             | P | N  |
| 1 Rose     | O1 | 5           | 0 | 1 | 4             | 2  | 0  | 3               | 2 | 0  | 0             | 3 | 2  |
|            | O2 | 6           | 0 | 0 | 4             | 1  | 1  | 2               | 1 | 2  | 0             | 3 | 2  |
|            | O3 | 6           | 0 | 0 | 1             | 4  | 1  | 4               | 0 | 1  | 0             | 1 | 4  |
| 2 Jasmine  | O1 | 4           | 1 | 1 | 4             | 0  | 2  | 1               | 3 | 1  | 0             | 0 | 5  |
|            | O2 | 4           | 1 | 1 | 2             | 0  | 4  | 1               | 1 | 3  | 0             | 0 | 5  |
|            | O3 | 3           | 1 | 2 | 2             | 0  | 4  | 2               | 0 | 3  | 0             | 0 | 5  |
| 3 Julia    | O1 | 4           | 0 | 1 | 0             | 2  | 4  | 1               | 0 | 4  | 0             | 0 | 5  |
|            | O2 | 5           | 0 | 0 | 1             | 2  | 3  | 0               | 0 | 5  | 0             | 1 | 4  |
|            | O3 | 4           | 1 | 1 | 1             | 2  | 2  | 2               | 0 | 3  | 0             | 1 | 4  |
| 4 Reza     | O1 | 6           | 0 | 0 | 2             | 0  | 4  | 1               | 0 | 4  | 0             | 0 | 5  |
|            | O2 | 6           | 0 | 0 | 4             | 0  | 2  | 1               | 0 | 4  | 0             | 0 | 5  |
|            | O3 | 6           | 0 | 0 | 4             | 0  | 2  | 1               | 0 | 4  | 2             | 0 | 3  |
| Total      |    | 59          | 4 | 7 | 29            | 13 | 29 | 19              | 7 | 34 | 2             | 9 | 49 |

Y = Yes, P = Partially, N = No, O1, O2 and O3 refer to observations 1, 2, and 3 respectively.

O3). It is interesting to note that, over the three observations, the affirmative responses for the first two stages – i.e. the coaching and motivating stages - generally decrease over time, while there is a slight progressive increase in these responses for the third and fourth stages. Both these observations seem to indicate that the teachers begin the early part of the semester with lower staged (stage 1 and stage 2) practices in self-directedness but gradually increase the use of practices that reflect the latter stages (stages 3 and 4) as the semester progresses.

Thirdly, the observed use of the self-directed practices of at least 3 of the 4 stages by the teachers may indicate that it may not be accurate to describe teachers as belonging singularly to one stage or another. Rather, these stages represent some form of hierarchy and hence, a teacher who exhibits the characteristics of a facilitator can also

use practices that reflect the coach (stage 1) and the motivator (stage 2). However, this may not occur in reverse with a teacher-coach at stage 1 may not necessarily being able to use the practices of the motivator, the facilitator and the delegator at the higher stages of the model.

Finally, individual teacher characteristics also seem to have some influence on the kind of teaching practice used. For example, the two younger teachers, Rose and Reza, were observed to use coaching practices more often than their more experienced counterparts. This may be an indication of their need to exert some form of authority or classroom presence through a more teacher led approach especially in the early years of their teaching career. However, it is also refreshing to note that the same younger teachers are also more keen to attempt delegation practices (stage 4) and it may be



possible to attribute this to greater exposure to this concept, having graduated more recently with teaching degrees compared to their more experienced counterparts.

### **Examples of Teacher Actions that Encouraged Self-Directedness**

This study also attempted to document instances of teaching where learner self-directedness was encouraged according to the four stages of the Staged Self-Directed Learning model. Observation of these instances is reported here together with the stage (C for coaching, M for motivating, F for facilitating, and D for delegating) and statement number as in the observation checklist. For example C3 would refer to statement 3 in the coaching stage and M4 would refer to statement 4 in the motivating stage (please refer to Appendix A).

Coaching, the first stage of the model, yielded the most examples of teacher practice. Some of the examples of the coaching stage that were observed include providing clear-cut objectives and straightforward techniques (C2), reflected by the teacher's advice to the students to "familiarise yourself with the topic before you come to class". It is not surprising that this stage provided many examples as teachers were at the very least expected to give students some advice on how to learn.

In the second stage, teacher practices are reflected through statements made by the teacher as well as observations made of the teachers' actions. In M1, for example, the teacher is recorded as asking the students: "Why is taking notes important and what is

it for?" Similarly, the use of jokes and praise (M2), training the students to use basic self-directed learning techniques in M3 (e.g. Did you predict the content of the text before you read), and use of the teacher's own personal experience in learning in M6 (e.g. experiences with students who had problems with plagiarism) all point to teachers being familiar with the practices that represent this stage of the self-directed model. Once again, teachers should be expected to motivate the students to learn and motivating them to use learning strategies such as reflection should also be a minimum requirement to effective teaching and developing self-directedness among students.

The third, and especially the fourth, stages of the model were the least represented in the actions teachers took in their classrooms. Observations where teachers conducted some discussion based on content (F4) and teacher suggestions for students to look up resources, e.g. policy on plagiarism (F3), indicate that teachers did demonstrate characteristics of a facilitator. As for stage four (delegating), there were hardly any instances of the teachers using any of the practices. The only two observed were by Reza in his third class lesson. These two stages represent a "letting go" of teacher authority and centrality in the classroom and unsurprisingly represent the most difficult aspect of encouraging self-directedness for teachers. Some of the overall remarks of the observers also reflected how the teachers maintained a close control of the proceedings in the classroom. One observer commented that "the lesson was teacher-led"

and that “much of the interaction revolves around the teacher eliciting responses from students”. Another observer noted that “largely, how the students should learn is based on what the teachers say”.

### **Missed Opportunities in Encouraging Self-Directedness**

The observations also uncovered several instances when the teacher could have encouraged self-directedness but missed the opportunity to do so. In one instance, as an example, when one of the teachers was going through the answers for a previously assigned take-home task, she announced to the class “This is the answer. Anybody got anything different? What did you get?” In this particular situation, the researcher present in the classroom felt that the teacher missed the opportunity to be a delegator as she could have begun her review by asking who had the answer, react to any response given, followed only then by offering the correct answer. Subsequently, she could have then asked her students whether they agreed with the answer and discussed their responses. This tendency to use answers to questions as the basis of class discussion was seen as a general approach taken by at least one of the teachers. This approach, however, tends to preclude discussion of student answers as students will wait for the answer to be given by the teachers and will be discouraged from volunteering their own answers.

The kind of student-teacher interaction in the classroom is also a good indicator of how much attention the teachers give

to the development of their students’ self-directedness. As mentioned earlier, the lessons observed were largely teacher-directed. While this may not necessarily be detrimental to student directedness, the kind of student-teacher interaction in the classrooms observed did not encourage student self-directedness. Two situations reflect this situation. Firstly, one of the researchers observed how the teacher tends to go straight to the teaching point or points and does not discuss the content before leading up to these points. Once again, just like when the teachers focus directly on the answers without attempting to first elicit student answers, going straight to the teaching points pre-empts any kind of student discussion. The other instance is seen in how there is a lack of confirmation checks on the part of the teacher. Teacher explanation was observed to be uninterrupted and continuous with little evidence of the teacher checking on student comprehension, let alone allowing for student involvement.

In another instance, a teacher was observed to have asked her students how many of them used note cards to take notes. The researcher-observer noted that while this was a good way to make students aware of their learning strategies, the teacher missed the opportunity to dwell deeper into the issue and encourage the students to reflect into their own learning by asking them whether they thought that using note cards was an effective strategy and give reasons why they thought so. By only asking how many students used note cards without eliciting their responses

regarding the effectiveness of this learning strategy, the teacher seems to show that he was more interested in the quantity of those who used the strategy but not the quality or effectiveness of the strategy.

Clearly, the teachers who were observed did not demonstrate that they were at stage 4, i.e. delegators, of the Staged Self Directed Learning model. As indicated earlier in Table 2, only twice were actions associated with delegators observed. It is also noted that, generally, the approach taken by the teachers was to show the expected answers and then discuss the answers based on the expected answers. They could have asked for student responses first and then only offer the expected answers. Largely, therefore, it can be implied that what the students learn in the classroom is almost completely determined by the teacher. Even during revision, input comes from the teacher rather than the students. Similarly, predictions during pre-activity were not encouraged.

One reason that this could be occurring is that much of the interaction in the classroom revolves around the class assignment and the teachers eliciting responses from students related to the assignment. Teachers tend to go immediately to the teaching and not discuss student opinions of the content. From a language teaching and learning perspective, there was a lack of spontaneity and natural conversation in the classroom. Interaction that elicits student personal response and opinion can encourage greater student self-directedness. For example, there could have been more confirmatory

checks made by the teacher – e.g. Do you understand this? How and why did this happen? – used in the classroom. In addition to discouraging self-directedness, this classroom situation is also detrimental to language learning which requires exposure to natural language input and interaction just as much as, if not more than, focused and direct instruction by the teacher.

## CONCLUSION

The role of the teacher in encouraging self-directed learning cannot be over-emphasised. This is especially so in contexts where classrooms have traditionally been teacher fronted as is in the case of many Asian cultures. The results of a study by Xuan (2017) indicate that learners hold high intrinsic motivation in self-directed learning, yet lack the techniques, especially language learning strategies, to learn autonomously throughout the English learning process. Hence the teacher should be well equipped to guide the students towards becoming self-directed learners, including training them to become more familiar with the use of appropriate language learning strategies. Some notable instructional learner-centred activities that can be conducted to promote the use and development of metacognitive strategies are peer review, reflective learning journals, analysis and synthesis (Shien & Akiko, 2009). Certainly, the opportunities to further self-directed learning among students in the classroom should not be missed or neglected. Teachers must be more sensitive to opportunities to encourage self-directed learning. This is especially so in a

passive learning culture where traditionally, students do not express a strong inquisitive nature and are generally accepting of what is taught while in the classroom. As Adler et al. (2000) noted from his study, educator respondents stated that a major impediment to learner-centred approaches included learning culture, especially among Asian students who they saw as being less actively involved in their learning. The observation data, however, present some differences in the practices of teachers according to their years of experience, with younger teachers seemingly more willing to attempt practices that encourage self-directedness. Further studies could examine teaching trends related to self-directedness based on these differences using other techniques such as interviews and longitudinal case studies.

The observation data also indicated that although there were instances where teachers encouraged self-directedness among the learners, the data also revealed that the lessons were generally still teacher-centred. The majority of class time involved teachers speaking and instructing the students as to what should be done and how it should be done. One possible reason for this situation could be the teachers' lack of exposure to SDL strategies. As the teachers were observed to be dependent on written materials such as the assignments and textbooks, it is suggested that such strategies be incorporated into these textbooks so that they are constantly reminded of the need to prioritize learner autonomous development. Another reason may be the time they are given to teach as well as the curriculum

they are expected to teach. Teachers who are concerned with the limited amount of time, fast pace of the foundation studies programme and the amount of language materials mandated in the programme, might not be able to render sufficient and effective monitoring, feedback and attention to the development of students' SDL, nor ensure positive student experiences in reflection, self-evaluation and critical thinking skills (Shien & Akiko, 2009). Hiemstra (2013) noted the same phenomenon as he cited colleagues who told him that the short time frame of the term or semester was a factor in not giving attention to SDL. Some instructors in his study express a belief in developing SDL but do not wish to sacrifice the routines and habits they are familiar with through a change of approach. Other reasons include the lack of trust in the students' abilities and the "sense of identity" normally associated with instructors teaching at higher institutions.

This study has shown that although the practices teachers use in the classrooms are mostly from the first two stages of self-directed learning, some practices do come from the higher stages, especially the third stage of facilitating. The number of practices from these three stages also increases as the semester progresses. Both these observations are rather encouraging as they reflect that teachers seem to have some inclination towards encouraging self-directedness among their students. Nevertheless, if SDL is to become a common learning approach in the Malaysian education system, teachers must not only have the correct mind-set

for the classroom, focusing on creating opportunities as well as taking every opportunity to encourage self-directedness. This may require a support system that trains and encourages the teachers to implement a student centred teaching pedagogy. This step is not uncommon as some professional bodies such as the Liaison Committee for Medical Education [LCME] (2018) in the United States have endorsed SDL as a requirement of the curriculum in their discipline in their Standards for Accreditation. Clearly, teachers may need a change in their perspective towards teaching and, possibly, greater preparedness to adopt a complete change in their teaching practice including relinquishing some of the authority they normally wield in more teacher-centred classrooms.

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**APPENIDX**

**Instructional Observation Checklist (Grow, 1991)**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Week( ) Observation 1 / 2 / 3 Observer: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of the Lesson: \_\_\_\_\_ Language instructor evaluated: \_\_\_\_\_

|                              | Staged Self-Directed Learning (SSDL) Model<br>Categories  | Response |   |   | Comments |
|------------------------------|---|----------|---|---|----------|
|                              |   | Y        | P | N |          |
| <b>Stage 1: Coaching</b>     |   |          |   |   |          |
| C1                           | Prescribe definite deadlines for activities.  |          |   |   |          |
| C2                           | Prescribe clear-cut objectives and straightforward techniques.  |          |   |   |          |
| C3                           | Assign structured activities and drills.  |          |   |   |          |
| C4                           | Mainly one-way and clear communication.   |          |   |   |          |
| C5                           | Assess classroom activities /drills objectively.  |          |   |   |          |
| C6                           | Provide immediate, frequent and task-oriented feedback.   |          |   |   |          |
|                              | Others:   |          |   |   |          |
| <b>Stage 2: Motivating</b>   |   |          |   |   |          |
| M1                           | Give clear explanations of why the skills are important and how the assignments help to attain them.                |          |   |   |          |
| M2                           | Use highly supportive approach and focuses on personal interaction. E.g. praises, encouraging feedback              |          |   |   |          |
| M3                           | Train students in basic self-directed learning skills such as goal setting.   |          |   |   |          |
| M4                           | Match teaching students' interest to the subject.   |          |   |   |          |
| M5                           | Two-way communication e.g. Teacher-led discussion, demonstration by teacher followed by practice                    |          |   |   |          |
| M6                           | Shares personal experiences on how skills were learned  |          |   |   |          |
|                              | Others:   |          |   |   |          |
| <b>Stage 3: Facilitating</b> |   |          |   |   |          |
| F1                           | Assign open-ended, student developed group projects without close supervision                                       |          |   |   |          |
| F2                           | Use learning contracts, written criteria, evaluation checklist to help students monitor their own progress          |          |   |   |          |
| F3                           | Refers students to books and / or on-line resources that are relevant to the classroom lesson.                      |          |   |   |          |
| F4                           | Creates opportunities for students to <i>use</i> the language skills meaningfully and in context                    |          |   |   |          |
| F5                           | Provides feedback to students on ways to improve their work (n/b: not focus on correction and accuracy but meaning) |          |   |   |          |
|                              | Others:   |          |   |   |          |

| Stage 4: Delegating |   |  |  |  |  |
|---------------------|---|--|--|--|--|
| D1                  | Discusses with students how they think they should be assessed                                    |  |  |  |  |
| D2                  | Encourages students to express how they have progressed   |  |  |  |  |
| D3                  | Encourages students to cooperate and consult with each other (n/b: not just to discuss in groups) |  |  |  |  |
| D4                  | Encourages students to reflect on what and how they have learned in the lesson                    |  |  |  |  |
| D5                  | Elicits from students how they prefer to learn  |  |  |  |  |
|                     | Others:   |  |  |  |  |