

TEACHERS' FACILITATION IN SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING FOR CHINESE
COLLEGE STUDENTS IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE COURSES

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Abstract

Since the introduction of the teaching principle of cultivating students' self-directed learning (SDL) skills based on classroom learning in China started in 1990s, the advances of the new principle have soon attracted attention from Chinese educational community, as cultivating students' SDL skills is the right need for improving the China's traditional education principles. Now, most of the colleges and universities in China have been under transformation from the traditional passive teacher-centered educating mode to the new one emphasizing educating college students both professional knowledge and SDL skills to fulfill students' further self-development after graduation for meeting the social needs. Under this circumstance, the author in this paper focuses her attention on how teachers facilitate SDL based on college English course for Chinese college students' EFL. One objective of this paper is to collect information and experience on conducting SDL from reviewing the relevant literature. The second objective is to make clear the current situation of Chinese college students' ESL, and the necessity and feasibility to cultivate Chinese students' SDL in the EFL courses. The third objective is to associate the wisdom and experience from the reviewed literature and the author's own teaching practice to give some implications for facilitating DSL in EFL classroom. The author hopes this paper can give some suggestions to teachers who seek to apply his new educating principle into ESL courses, and calls for joint effort to creating a SDL-friendly environment on campus

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Chapter I Introduction

There is advice from common lore that reads “Give a man a fish and he eats for a day. Teach him how to fish and he eats for a lifetime.” Gao and Zhang (2007) have pointed out that contemporary Chinese college English teaching employs cramming methods and operates based on a factory-like, assembly-line structure which neglects students’ individual differences, and discourages students’ motivation and interests to learn English. Moreover, in the “Information Age”, much of the knowledge one has learnt in schools would probably become obsolete or need supplementing soon after he graduates. Personal and professional success is seen to depend increasingly on continued learning and development throughout one's lifetime. As a result, the traditional methods of college English teaching in China cannot meet the needs of the students’ development for English proficiency or satisfy the social requirements for the qualified personnel.

Different from learning passively by the teacher-centered cramming teaching modes, Self-Directed Learning (SDL) is learner-centered lifelong learning, able to be conducted by any person at any time, any place and any age. In the SDL process, learners take the initiative to learn--they determine their learning purpose, adopt suitable strategies, control their learning process, and assess their learning achievement. The autonomy in SDL promotes learners’ learning enthusiasm and the experience from SDL enables them to pursue their further study continuously so as to stand at the trend of information explosion. These advantages of SDL are the right supplements for the deficiencies in China’s traditional teacher-centered examine-oriented teaching principles. Therefore, to promote the ability for self-directed lifelong learning among students based on classroom learning has been deemed another important task in higher education, as is embraced in current *College English*

Curriculum Requirements issued by Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China in 2004. Teachers are required to creatively design the classroom subject learning as a medium for enhancing students' SDL capacity. And this teaching principle also can be applied effectively in China's college English teaching and learning.

Although the most of the literature about SDL in higher education in western countries are mainly based on other subjects other than English language and the teaching principle of cultivating students' SDL in Chinese EFT (teaching English as a foreign language) was only initially attempted at the early 21 century, teachers also can learn a lot from others' relevant studies and their own exploring practice. From what the author has learned from others' studies and her own practice, it is quite clear that English teachers also have to, and be able to, play a key role in this new educational practice to help student transitioning form the traditional teacher-centered learning to SDL based on EFL courses, and provide students with sufficient support and guidance in the whole process of constructing their SDL ability based on classroom EFL.

Statement of the Problem

English language is the most widely-used language in the world and an important global medium of communicating, getting knowledge and exhibiting achievements. Learning English in current China has already become a fashion and English has been prescribed as a required course in College Curriculums. However, for a long time teaching principles in China's College English courses have put too much emphasis on the teacher-centered and examination-oriented mode--teachers dominate the whole process of EFL, and passing the English examination is the main requirement students are asked to meet. Under these

principles, students' motivation for learning English is greatly discouraged---what they need in EFL can not fully satisfied by English teacher's lectures and their real proficiency and performance in English can not be reasonably justified by the test grades. Over time students will get confused in EFL about why to learn, how to learn and what to learn.

The deficiency caused by these traditional principles in China's English courses has gradually revealed and it has aroused the reflection in the community of EFL. In 2004, China's Education Community prescribed new requirements for College English Courses. In these new requirements, College English courses are not perceived as an isolated subject like before, but a basic subject for equipping students with another means to pursue their own study and careers in their specialized and interesting fields; thus, English is viewed associated with students' major subject and lifelong learning. Students are not only required to master the linguistic knowledge of English and improve their integrated skills in English language, but also required to develop SDL skills in their English learning process for furthering their English learning after completing their College English Courses. For another thing, teachers are asked to motivate students in English learning by giving students appropriate guidance and facilitation and returning them some autonomy rather than totally controlling their EFL. And based on the classroom teaching, besides trying creating opportunities for students to practice their four skills actively, teachers are also required to creatively cultivate students' SDL skills, developing their abilities of determining why to learn, what to learn and how to learning for bettering their future study in English and their specialized fields.

Now, how to facilitate students to develop SDL skills based on College English

Courses in classroom teaching has been a hot issue in China's community of EFL. Most of English teachers in China have been experimenting possible measures, however, without settlement. Thus, in this paper the author puts forward the question "How do teachers facilitate self-directed learning for Chinese college students' EFL for effective growth?" for making some researches in this field to gain some wisdom from others and giving some recommendations to the readers who are also interested in this question.

Definition of Terms

Facilitation. Facilitation is widely regarded as a process of guiding the group to use its knowledge, skills and potential to achieve its goals. It is particularly appropriate when groups have a need to focus on process issues such as how to work together effectively to achieve goals. These issues can include: sharing information, problem solving, decision making, dealing with conflict, group roles, etc. (Retrieved on April 5 from <http://www.icvet.tafensw.edu.au/resources/facilitation.htm>). Facilitation is a term used to describe a possible role of the teacher. Facilitation is providing the necessary resources, information and support in order for learners to complete a task, rather than teaching.

(Retrieved on April 5 from <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/think/knowledge-wiki/facilitation>).

Self-directed learning. In self-directed learning (SDL), learners demonstrate a high level of independence. Learners regulate their learning and plan, organize, monitor it independently from teachers. Generally, self-directed learners should be able to define their own objects, use available resources, organize their learning, develop their learner strategies, and evaluate their objectives. Correspondingly, for facilitating students' SDL, a teaching

technology, Self-directed teaching, has been evolved. It aims to give students greater control, ownership and accountability over their own education in order to enhance students' motivation, satisfy students' diversities and make education more meaningful and effective. Teachers are meant to transform the classroom into an experiential educational space, where learning is actively experience rather than passively absorbed. Besides, teachers should prepare students both practically and psychologically, help them develop and improve their learner strategies, and give them constant encouragement and guidance. Teachers can employ five teaching styles on a spectrum—Command, Task, Peer-Partner, Student-Teacher Contract, and Self-Directed—to promote students' independence and SDL skills gradually.

(Retrieved on March 13 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_language_learning &http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Student-directed_teaching).

EFL. Abbreviation for the term English as a foreign Language (Retrieved on January 3 from <http://www.answers.com/topic/efl>).

Delimitations of the Research

The research will be conducted in and through the Karrmann Library at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, over eighty-eight days. Primary searches will be conducted via the Internet through EBSCO host with ERIC, Academic Search Elite, Multi Research and Google/Google Scholar as the primary sources. Key search topics included “self-directed learning”, “teachers’ facilitation”, and “EFL”.

Method of Approach

A brief review of literature on the studies of self-directed learning conducted in schools will be conducted. A second review of literature relating teachers’ strategies for

facilitating students' self-directed learning will be conducted. Then some practice will be conducted in the author's EFL classroom based on the literature review. The experience will be summarized and recommendations made.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

Teachers' Facilitation in Students' Self-directed Learning

The Emergence and Meaning of Self-Directed Learning (SDL)

The urgent demand for SDL, resulting from the rapid change and growth of knowledge, emerges in this Information Age. In this age, people must constantly update their knowledge and skills to follow the pace of society and that can be fulfilled through SDL programs and experiences (Smith, 2008).

SDL appeared in 1968 as a mold of adult learning different from pre-adult education. (Merriam, 2001). And since then, SDL has been an influential adult learning concept and prominent area of research (Cho, Ellinger & Hezlett, 2005). Additionally, it has become a generic training mold prevailing in many fields including business, medicine and adult education (Smith, 2008).

Despite more than four-decade's development and research of SDL theory, no consistent definition of it has been reached. Among these different definitions, the one presented by Malcolm Knowles (1975) has a dominant influence:

Self-directed learning has been described as 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).

Besides, Ross(2002) generalizes the following four common aspects of SDL:

- A. learning for adaptation to and the transmission of culture,
- B. learning for the understanding and development of expertise or specialist knowledge,

C. learning for the vitalization of organizations and societies,

D. learning for personal fulfillment.

Beston, Culver, and Follows (2001) have stated that self-directed learners are mature learners.

when confronted with a new topic which they need or want to learn, are capable of setting educational goals, establishing a program for learning the desired information/skills, adapting the learning program to their own level of achievement. They have the motivation and discipline to work through the difficult stages of learning and can use a variety of resources, as needed, the help them master the material. (p. 1)

From the above, it is clear that learners with the ability of SDL take the initiative and the responsibility for their own learning, including selecting, designing, controlling and evaluating their learning activities. And SDL enables learners to break the confinement of time, place and age with various methods suitable for specific learners. It is a learning mold useful for learners to fulfill themselves through their lifetime to stand out in this fast-speeding society.

SDL in Higher Education

In the Arthur Andersen's Global Conference, "Learning for the 21st Century", Egol (1999), managing director of Arthur Andersen's School of the Future Program, has delivered that some of the contemporary schools still adopt traditional teaching system, operating based on the factory-like, assembly-line structure in which neglects students' individual differences and causes a high failure rate in students' performance. What's more, in this Information Age characteristic of the increasing pace of knowledge development and its rapid obsolescence, it is not sufficient for students just to get the crammed knowledge, while they need to learn how to learn, how to think creatively, and how to access others' knowledge.

This urgent situation requires a fundamental shift from the “teacher-teaching” model to a model where learners learn to take the autonomy in their study, that is, instead of teachers lecturing prescribed knowledge, self-directed learners learn how-to-learn in a system that stimulates the eagerness to learn and paves the way to lifelong learning.

Cho, Ellinger, and Hezlett (2005) have reported that one’s self-directedness ties to his/ her ability to contribute within an organization, so self-directedness is a crucial skill that should be developed among college students.

Additionally, education which fosters the SDL skill also motivates students most and gives them a feeling of independence and responsibility for their own learning. Rather than learning passively, the students conducting SDL are inspired by a sense of personal control and freedom, creation of a relaxed learning environment, elimination of pressure and fear, not being rushed, and opportunity to choose and adjust studying time and topics (Ausburn, 2002). And the environment deliberately structured by schools, in which students model good learning skills, is a more suitable environment for improving student’s readiness for SDL, and the college curriculum should be designed to provide students those good learning models and chances of practice for helping them develop SDL (Cate, Dynan, & Rhee, 2008).

Specifically, Don Green (1998) has outlined five different teaching styles on a spectrum for promoting students’ SDL skills gradually—Command, Task, Peer-Partner, Student-Teacher Contract, and Self-Directed. In the initial stage of Command style, teachers give formal instruction and assign guided practice for students in the class time. In the second stage of Task style, teachers determined the amount, kind and complexity of the practice to be done to complete the objectives. While in the following three styles, after students get

appropriate practical and psychological preparation, teachers can give students increasingly greater control, ownership and accountability over their learning.

Therefore, both from the perspectives of the social requirements and students' needs for emancipatory learning, teaching in school, at its best, aims to achieve at least two essential goals for students to increase knowledge related to the content of a specific subject and to develop skills that will benefit students even beyond students' specialties. SDL skills build the basis of students' lifelong learning (Cate, et al., 2008). Schools should become the launch pad for a life of self-directed learning—with the specialized knowledge and SDL skills they have learned in the classroom, students, once launched from school into life, can successfully navigate to pursue their own development (Costa & Kallick, 2004).

Teachers' Involvement in Students' SDL

In the SDL programs, “the instructor takes on the role of a facilitator” (DeMauro, 2008, p.20). Dolmans, Gijsselaers, Moust, De Grave, Wolfhagen, and Van Der Vleuten (2002) have contended that ideally a tutor should be specialized both in the subject being taught and in facilitating learning.

Despite different perspectives on SDL, all students and teachers consider that the success of SDL lies in some guidelines (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001). Boyer (2004) has clarified that in the student-centered learning like SDL, rather than the instructor guiding the process, the learner becomes the one guiding the learning direction, flow, meaning, and pace. But that is not meant to remove the instructor role from the process of learning—instead “Instructors play a critical role, within the model and instructional design of social, self-direction, via instructional design, student facilitation, content development, feedback/ critical analysis,

and evaluation” (p.130).

Teachers must balance the flexibility for students to determine the appropriate processes for learning and the interference for teachers to keep the program and students on track (Robotham, 1995).

After studying others’ relevant literature, Kathleen (2001) has concluded that to foster the development of SDL skills, teachers should

- (a) provide students with appropriate experience of self-direction by giving a range of choices of learning activities and materials;
- (b) help students to understand the importance of developing the ability to learn independently which will increase the likelihood of success in school and in the workplace;
- (c) help students to develop critical thinking and other higher-order skills;
- (d) set students in a structured environment relevant to their learning needs where students can and have to apply what they have learned;
- (e) work with older students to guide, facilitate, and provide resource in project-based learning activities that are primarily controlled by the students;
- (f) sense the initial difficulties and confusions from the SDL beginners, and ensure them available guidance throughout the process;
- (g) show students models of determining goals, designing learning plans and steps;
- (h) offer students experience and instruction in obtaining information from various resources such as from Internet, library and database.

In recent political climate, the school success is still largely evaluated by the test

scores resulting in most of learning and teaching driven by getting high scores in normalized examinations. That does not fully challenge gifted students, while at the same time discourages students who fall behind, and ultimately must hinder cultivating SDL. Educators should stick to what values most in education and reclaim a sense of self-direction by providing education experiences that enable students to become responsible, self-directed, continuous learners (Costa & Kallick, 2004).

Teachers' Facilitation in the Students' SDL Process

Teachers enhance students' mental adjustment and inspire their motivation.

The emotional aspects of learning are a crucial component of SDL deserves attention from teachers (Harden, 2003). Keeping highly motivated is key to SDL. But SDL is a challenging learning model for students, especially those who get used to traditional teacher-centered learning models. Thus, without proper orientation, those students “often experienced what they called ‘education culture shock’ and had difficulty adjusting to self-directed and self-paced learning” (Ausburn, 2002, p.228-229). “They mentioned the need for ‘mental adjustment’ as a basic requirement for success in a self-directed instructional environment” (Ausburn, 2002, p.229). Ausburn has found that SDL learners tend to confront difficulty of maintaining self-motivation, loss of interest, fear of falling behind, boredom, loss of direction and understanding, and slackness and they often feel frustrated and confused. Ausburn has suggested that teachers should design instructional strategies to prepare students for SDL environment and maintain their learning focus, direction and momentum; teachers should also consistently make a thorough introduction to the expectations and requirements of SDL in the instructional programs. This point is also

supported by Beston, Fellows, and Culver (2001). They have stated that to motivate the students to aspire to be self-directed learners is an important component of a successful program for teaching SDL, and to maintain the students' motivation, teachers must make explicit the reasons for developing the SDL skills with terms understandable and acceptable for students.

Akerlind and Trevirtt (1999) have revealed that when confronting the transition from the traditional teacher-centered education to SDL programs, some students display resistance and find it difficult to change or accept SDL in their learning skill sets. And teachers can increase these students' confidence by gradually introducing changes in instruction by:

- Clearly communicating requirements to students;
- Introducing activities that focus on increasing confidence;
- Introducing materials in developmental stages;
- Including appropriate skill development activities;
- Demonstrating these activities;
- Scaffolding students in groups;
- Presenting examples of previous student work; and
- Asking previous students to talk to the class (p. 100).

Bolhuis and Voeten (2004) have pointed out that teachers and students involved in SDL programs bear different tolerance of uncertainty and different perspectives of the dynamic process of SDL skill acquisition. Teachers with high tolerance of uncertainty tend to overlook students' needs for support on the assumption that students also bear the high-level tolerance. Teachers with low tolerance of uncertainty tend to hesitate in giving students

freedom on the assumption that students are not capable enough to take responsibility for their own learning. And most of the teachers think their intelligence is developed more dynamically than students', which somehow hinders teachers' ability to enhance students' intelligence actively. Thus, before and during the process of SDL programs, teachers should have a good look at their own tolerance of uncertainty and conception of intelligence development and those of their students, so that teachers can make objective judgment on students' SDL ability and offer effective support when needed.

Teachers deliberately structure SDL-enhancing Curriculum.

In school settings, "self-directed learning is a model of instruction whereby learning content is pre-determined by the instructor and students learn at their own pace to master this content" (Smith, 2008, p.1). Beston et al.(2001) have contended that one component determining the success of teaching SDL programs is that "the program must structure the development of the critical skills for SDL in order for the students to master them, practice them, and adopt them as the natural approach to learning any new topic (p.3)."

The challenge for teachers is to turn their expectations for SDL acquisition into reality by achieving the goal that SDL becomes the outcome for students. To meet this challenge, teachers should deliberately design lesson units and learning activities to motivate students to engage in various authentic, rich tasks that require adopting and practicing all kinds of SDL skills including strategic planning, creative approaches and complex thinking skills (Moulds, 2003-2004).

In the study of SDL readiness development conducted among students unprepared for SDL in the structured environment, Cate, Dynan, and Rhee (2008) have found that "the

structured environment, in which students model good learning skills, provided a more suitable environment for improving student readiness for SDL for more students” (p.96). Even facing the challenge arising from the multiple needs of a mixed-ability classroom, focusing on SDL skills early at course can meet the challenge.

Cate et al. (2008) have suggested that

SDL skills that would serve students over the course of their lifelong learning efforts could, and should, be built across the college curriculum. Early coursework could be highly structured with opportunity for self-directed work increasing with each level of the curriculum, ideally culminating in an SDL activity (p. 100).

Teachers learn students’ SDL readiness and monitor their SDL growth.

Cho, Ellinger, and Hezlett (2005) have mentioned that educators and human resources personnel can conduct teaching and training programs more effectively after assessing students’ and trainees’ levels of the self-directed readiness scale, which measures learners’ readiness to engage in SDL by revealing the degree the individual learner possesses characteristics necessary for SDL such as attitudes, personalities, abilities and so on. And the assessment of students’ and trainees’ levels of the self-directed readiness scale can be used to determine the type and amount of teacher-direction needed put into different students’ SDL (Fisher, King & Tague, 2001). Williamson (2007) has suggested that the accurate assessment of one’s SDL readiness is the first step towards self-directed learning and it can benefit students and teachers both. By means of certain suitable assessment tools, students can have a better understand about SDL concept and proper behaviors, identify the areas of their own strengths and weaknesses, and select the appropriate strategies to further their SDL skills. Meanwhile, the teachers can have a better insight into their students’ level of SDL, design more effective instructions, and offer effective and timely support to students’ individual

needs.

Smith (2008) has concluded several effective assessment tools to trace students' readiness and growth: (1)The Autonomous Learner Index, a Likert scale administered to students at the beginning and the end of the learning process to measure students' improvement in their self-directed learning process. The index involves six factors—*intrinsic motivation, perseverance in problem solving, need for structure in the learning involvement, learning curiosity, confidence in one's own study skills and need for teacher direction;* (2)The Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale (SDLRS), measuring the degree of people's perspective of their SDL skills and people's attitudes necessary for SDL. The scale involves eight factors to interpret self-directed behavior—*openness to learning opportunities, self-concept as an effective learner, initiative, independence in learning, informal acceptance of responsibility for one's learning, a love to learn, creativity, and future orientation for the ability to use basic study skills and problem-solving skills;* (3)The Self-Directed Learning Perception Scale (SDLPS), a reflective measurement to assess students' perceptions of the environmental characteristics influencing their ability to be self-directed. Cho et al. (2005) have also recommended another assessment tool, The Bartlett-Kotrlik Inventory of Self-Learning, which aims to measure SDL regarding personal, social, and environmental variables. They have modified it according to the school settings, and cut down its original eleven factors into ten—*intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, performance and self-efficacy of work, time management, goal setting, peer learning, help seeking, others performance ratings, supporting learning environment, and attitude towards technology.*

Teachers can adopt one of these or other assessment tools to the SDL programs

accordingly so as to trace the growth in their SDL learning, and to fulfill students' self-monitoring and teachers' monitoring simultaneously. And these tools enable both teachers and students to remain a keen awareness of SDL, to identify the strong points and weak points of students' SDL ability and processes, and then to modify the process, strategies, or even directions timely and effectively for further development .

Teachers offer effective feedback.

Pilling-Cormick(1996) has emphasized that providing feedback is a key component of any learning process. Students can encounter difficulties with self-directed learning if feedback is insufficient.

According to the study of Perera, Perera, Lee, Wijesuriya, and Win, (2008), students in higher education have full awareness of the usefulness of feedback for learning and realized that the most needed and useful form of feedback is clearly defined, task oriented, simple and timely provide by a content specialist in a written form. Students eager that this formative feedback, rather than assessment just with model answers and grades, is to be incorporated into all the teaching activities from the beginning of the course to promote self regulated and self directed learning.

Besides offering explicit, focused, timely written feedback, teachers must communicate actively with students to motivate them to reflect upon their previous self-directed learning experiences. Through this kind of communication, teachers can identify students' growth and difficulties, give assistance promptly and gradually make students become more reflective and thinking more critically (Smith, 2008).

To sum up the relevant literature, conducting SDL programs and fostering students' SDL ability is a duty the higher education must assume. But conducting SDL education is not

equal to throw all the control of learning to the students' shoulders or to remove the role of teachers. Without a constructed learning environment and facilitation created by school and teachers, students can hardly develop SDL skills efficiently and effectively and they can barely obtain achievement within and beyond their specialties. As facilitators in SDL programs, teachers should foster the cultivation of students' SDL ability based on content learning by deliberately designing relevant programs and strategies, providing sufficient guidance and direction, clarifying aims and objectives, adopting effective assessment and evaluation methods, and offer timely feedback and assistance. With the joint effort from teachers and students, the educational system will eventually turn into a launch pad for self-directed talents rather than assembly lines for passive learners.

Chapter III

The Necessity and Feasibility of Fostering Chinese College Students' SDL

Ability in EFL and Implications for Facilitating SDL in Their EFL

Classroom

The Necessity and Feasibility of Fostering Chinese College Students' SDL Ability in EFL

By comparison with America and many European countries where SDL has been explored since 1970s and has already widely adopted by many schools, educators in China began to study SDL in 1990s (Chen & Sun, 2008). However, with the knowledge explosion and the increasing requirement of the fast developing society, educational institutions in China very soon realized that the traditional teaching principle—focusing on feeding students with professional knowledge—could not produce graduates capable of meeting the social needs, because in this Information Age what the graduates learned at school would soon be outdated quickly and they need to continue to learn by themselves so as to catch up with the progress of knowledge and to take some fresh transfusion into what they have learned. The society's needs call for Chinese learners to be equipped, both with certain professional knowledge, and with SDL ability to pursue lifelong study.

With that awareness, many universities in China have taken steps to integrate cultivating students' SDL ability into the traditional education, aiming at enable students to conduct their own study systematically both on their majors and on the fields appealing to them, so that graduating students can master not only a solid professional knowledge but also

SDL abilities and skills. Nowadays, more and more campuses in China have become the bases for students to acquire and practice SDL skills.

In China, the principle of SDL entered into EFL even much later. But the relevant studies and experiments have revealed that conducting SDL in college English courses can provide students more chances to apply English in certain structured situations and can greatly stimulate students' motivation to learn English. Besides, from my teaching practice and related survey on students, it is clear that nurturing students' SDL ability for ESL is quite necessary and feasible.

The Necessity

Wang and Zhang have asserted (2008) that defects in the traditional teaching principles for China's college English teaching and learning have hindered the development of the Chinese College English education. First, the traditional educational principles in China's College English Courses are outdated, which mainly rely on feeding the knowledge into students while neglect students' real demands and different levels of acceptance. Second, the scope of teaching content is too narrow. The teaching content and activities mainly revolve around the textbooks. That limits the room for students' application of English. Third, traditionally in college English teaching, teachers always take teacher-centered cramming methods. This will discourage students' creativity and motivation to learn. Fourth, the measurement for assessment is one-dimensional. A student's performance in ESL is ultimately determined by the scores in the English final examination. This forces student to value the scores to extreme while devalue the learning process and ability growth, and ultimately drives students to learn English by rote which defies the principle of second

language acquisition.

Social development also urges the College English education to undergo reform to bring up students with SDL ability for EFL. The demand and tide of society is the baton to education. College English education is also branded with the social features. At the time with the fast development of information and knowledge, it is inevitable for English education to foster students' SDL ability to enable students keep self-development in EFL after graduation. *College English Curriculum Requirements* issued by Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (2004) has made it clear that China's College English Courses should be perceived as means of improving students' proficiency in English language as well as equipping students with another language tool for mastering advanced knowledge in their specialized field; College English Courses should aim at training students' ability to apply English comprehensively, should take active teaching principles and various teaching methods to care for individual differences, and should highlight the assessment for learning process; and the success of EFL lies in students' formation of individual learning methods and the development of their SDL capacity for meeting students' demand of learning and using English out of class and after their instructed EFL. Thus, adopting SDL in ESL meets these requirements.

From all the above, EFT in China's college English courses should turn to cultivate students' SDL ability to flow with the trend of current situation.

The Feasibility

Wang and Zhang (2007) have found that introduction of cultivating students' SDL skills based on classroom ESL can meet students' and teachers' requirement for qualified

college English education. Both students and teachers have been fully aware of the defects of the traditional English teaching. According to their surveys, many Chinese college students have great motivation to learn English well and use English for communication and further study. They are eager to actively engage in the class activities and apply English in certain structured situations. English teachers, all of whom majored in English and went through their major learning mainly under a situation in favor of SDL, also have great motivation to apply their experience in the teaching practice to educate students qualified English proficiency.

Wang and Zhang (2007) have also pointed out that the increased concern and economic support from the educational institutions ensure the material and technique guarantee for conducting SDL in ESL. With the access to internet and the development of college English learning software, students can seek for information relevant to the courses and choose various English learning materials suitable for their own interests and needs. And online communication and studying system can give students more opportunities to exchange with students and teachers.

From the above, it is clear that motivation from students and teachers and the material and technique support from the educational institutions make it feasible to experiment with teaching by focus on cultivating students' SDL ability in ESL.

Implications for Facilitating SDL in the EFL Classroom

Since the exploration to adopt the principle of SDL into Chinese EST just started at the beginning of 21 century, Chinese educators in English education have a long way to go to accumulate enough experience for establishing a theory for conducting SDL in EFT

(teaching English as a foreign language). However, Chinese educators can still learn and borrow a lot from relevant studies conducted in foreign countries where the principle of SDL has already been studied for more than three decades and educators there have already accumulated rich experience and gained great achievements. Although most of these studies are based on experiments in other subjects other than in EST, they still serve as valuable resources for Chinese educators to draw out implications for facilitating SDL in EFT.

From what have been learned from the related literature, it is obvious that fostering students' ESL ability has required high demands from teachers, and teachers have to take much responsibility for helping students master SDL skills. Teachers should fully understand the concept of SDL and the roles they should play, and consistently study the dynamic features of SDL and strategies for fostering students' SDL ability so as to render sufficient support to students.

From the horizontal prospective

According to the achievement shown from the relevant literature, teachers should not keep the traditional role as workers at the assembly line just feeding students in a uniformed way. Instead teachers should move from the central and dominating place on the stage to the wings to give students necessary support. From the horizontal prospective, teachers should take the following roles in facilitating students SDL in ESL.

Guide. Promoting SDL and SDL teaching principle at university is not totally equal to learning on one's own but is centered on the students' active participation in the learning and teaching process with teachers' guidance, from which students can internalize experience as well as taking in knowledge. Without teachers as guide, SDL will be time-and-energy

consuming for students to organize and design their studies due to a lack of experience and knowledge. So besides giving students freedom to learn, teachers also should give students certain guidance to help them set rational study plan and strategies, and to lead them to the SDL acquisition step by step.

Constructor. Language stems from reality and, further, gets enriched, developed and acquired in reality. Teachers can construct many types of lessons to create active and pragmatic situations to motivate students to get enough input and produce enough output actively. Teachers can construct comfortable and equal settings, for example by arranging the classroom with round tables rather than desks, to enhance exchanges about a common SDL task in a group. Then teachers should encourage all the students to exchange in English and construct some tasks, such as debates, role-play, speech contests, etc, to engage all the students in. Besides, teachers also should construct a relaxing and tolerant atmosphere to make students willing to express their ideas and share their learning results in public while not being hesitated over making mistakes.

Participant. It is quite essential for teachers to stand equally by their students and see themselves as participants in students' SDL. This will benefit both sides. Students will not be pressed by teachers' traditional authority and will feel free to communicate with teachers based on a friendly relationship. At the same time, teachers can literally get clear about students' ability, progress, needs and shortcomings, and work out the direction for guidance.

Resource person. Teachers are the most direct resource for students. First, teachers can teach students how to learn by systematically-organized lectures and teaching activities, and establish an awareness of their teaching style. Second, teachers should be learned enough

to give response to students' questions about English problems. Third, teachers should also prepare the way for students to get access to Internet to seek for resource about ESL. Fourth, teachers also can seek and create more resources for students, such as by inviting experts to some lectures on ESL, organizing seminars for students to exchange learning experience, and so on.

Supervisor. Teachers should supervise students SDL activities and watch their learning process and results. When students feel a lack of self-confidence and/or impatience, teachers should give suitable warning and help students make some adjustments. When the students' learning process meets with blocks, teachers should give them some guidance to lead them to the right way.

Counselor. To be a counselor the teacher mainly focuses on rendering students physiological service. To practice SDL in the learning tasks, students must experience a transformation from the traditional education to the new one. Students with low tolerance of uncertainty will suffer more anxiety than other students during his transformation, and tend to give up easily. Teachers should be very keen on these students' troubles, communicate them in time and actively give them immediate help whenever they need.

From the vertical prospective

The process for students to acquire SDL skills and ability is like the process for little children to learn how to walk. Although the little children, perhaps are eager to, leave their parents' embraces to imitate and practice walking by themselves, they also need parents to teach them some skills, watch their learning process and help them when necessary. Thus, from the horizontal prospective, teachers should get involved in the whole process of

students' development of their SDL skills.

1. Teachers should get full understanding about their own and students' preparation for conducting SDL in SET.

It is inevitable for both students and teachers to suffer different levels of stress and anxiety during the transformation from the traditional education to the new one. Teachers who doubt the students' ability and emphasize teachers' dominating role bear low tolerance of uncertainty. They tend to get stuck in teacher-centered teaching and restrain students' freedom to learn. While teachers who feel too confident of student' ability and think any involvement from teachers would interfere with the students' performance bear high tolerance of uncertainty. These teachers may regard students' ability too highly to sense students' need for their help.

On the other hand, students who focus on the static characteristics of learning ability and performance goals bear low tolerance of uncertainty; they tend to give up easily when facing difficulties. While students who focus on the dynamic growth of ability and learning achievement bear high tolerance of uncertainty; they tend to enjoy the learning process and gain more than the learning results.

Teachers should make clear their own tolerance of uncertainty and their students' so that they can adjust their teaching strategies and give different support to students with different levels of tolerance of uncertainty.

Besides, various assessments for the readiness of SDL and the SDL process have been brought up in the related literature. Among those assessments, the author preferably recommends a 60-item Self-Rating Scale of Self-Directed Learning (SRSSDL) proposed by

Williamson (2007) for an overall preparation and control over SDL. SRSSDL benefits both students and teachers involved in SDL in EFL and EFT. From the final scores of it, students can understand the concept of SDL and their levels of self-directness more clearly, and find out their strengths and weaknesses. From the answers of it, teachers can find out students' individual differences and needs so as to give better support.

2. Teachers should allow students a period of time to establish a foundation of SDL by learning from their teachers' teaching modes.

SDL skills can be better acquired by students in a structured environment in which students can model their learning skills (Cate, et al., 2008). Teachers are the most direct learning model for students. During teaching in a certain course, teachers should consciously highlight teaching steps and strategies to arouse students' awareness of learning design and organization. Take the author's College English class for example: she always designs the class in the following steps:

Step 1: lead-in activity—o give students some background information and make students conduct pre-reflection on the topic of the text

Step 2: extensive reading for this text-- to make students get clear about the general idea, theme and structure of this text

Step 3: detail learning— ① give students lectures and practice about language points learning, including learning new words, phrases, grammars and sentence structures; ② conduct intensive reading for this text to make students have a comprehensive understanding of the text and learn to appreciate it; ③ conduct writing practice to train students the writing techniques presented in this article.

Step 4: follow-up activity—ask students to ①make some comments on the text and relevant theme; ②make a reflection on what has been learned about the text by writing journals including gains and confusion on the contents, teaching and learning strategies and procedures; ③ read and study more materials relevant to this topic from resources outside the textbook, and then share individual studies with classmates.

Among these steps, teachers should also give precise analyses on learning strategies, such as how to choose different reading techniques to reach different levels of reading comprehension, or how to choose techniques to memorize new language points and master new grammar points, to help students to develop awareness of strategies.

After a period of input, teachers can give students chances to learn a certain text on their own following what they have learned in the previous classes. Then teachers have to give students quizzes about the text understanding, learning process, strategy application to check their learning. Then feedbacks, based on the quizzes will be given to students to help them reflect on their SDL learning further.

3. Teachers should be involved in students' SDL process, including setting learning purposes, design learning process, choosing strategies, and making assessment.

Most of the time, it is not easy for Chinese SDL beginners to determine their purpose, but if once they settle it, they will be able to pursue it with great motivation (Wang &/Zhang, 2007). That is where teachers enter. Teachers should help students to see clearly the direction of their study, and help them to set achievable and realistic goals with several manageable units. Otherwise, students tend to lose their motivation for difficulties beyond their ability. In Chinese college English courses, it is too frustrating to force students to work directly

towards the goal of passing National College English Test-Band 4 (CET4) and National College English Test- Band 6 (CET6). Teachers should help students to separate this goal into several single units of mastering every language knowledge and skill in each text. Students will be motivated greatly by the achievement in the short-term goal and will ultimately enjoy the success in CET4 and CET 6 which comes from their daily slow and sure study.

During students' SDL process, teachers should stand by, watch, and make frequent communication with students so as to get to know students' achievement and difficulties, then to give them support or help them make some adjustment when necessary.

Moreover, most of the students are not knowledgeable and experienced enough to make a thorough assessment on their own learning. Teachers should design certain quizzes and questionnaires to help students to check their learning and help them to find out their weaknesses. Equally important is that teachers also have to make assessment on students not only about their learning results, but also about their learning performance and activity, and add this evaluation to the final scores. This way will encourage students' participation greatly.

4. Teachers' immediate feedback and hard work are also great motivations for students to learn English.

Teachers should always be there to give students care, support and advice, and should always be there to watch and record students' SDL development. With strategies like communicating through students' learning journals, conducting questionnaires and quizzes, and making conversation with students about their SDL, students will unconsciously develop

a habit of making reflection on their SDL; and at the same time teachers can keep the flow of students' progress and realize students' needs in time.

Restraints in Adopting SEL in Chinese EST

Although cultivating students' SDL ability coupled with professional knowledge has become the focus of attention in Chinese EFT, and this new principle has got positive response from teachers and students, there are still lots of restraints hindering the popularization of this new teaching principle:

1. The traditional teacher-centered English teaching has left a deep influence on all stages of EFT. Most of students have already got used to relying on teachers, and some teachers also tend not to give up their dominating control over students' EFL.
2. Chinese traditional ethnic code makes Chinese students mostly focus on their own effort during learning rather than communication and cooperation with fellows and teachers.
3. The mimic English-pragmatic situation is far removed from the real situation. Except for in-class and tackling English tasks, there is little chance for students to apply English in their daily life.
4. The learning material for students to conduct SDL in EFL is mainly confined to textbooks. That cannot satisfy every student's needs and interests.
5. Few students can afford computers, and the development of EFL and EFT software falls far behind the progress of English education.
6. Teachers are badly in shortage. In Chinese universities, on average an English teacher takes charge of two classes in each of which there are about seventy five students. It is very hard for a teacher to take responsibility for so many students in their SDL in ESL.

(Chen & Sun, 2008).

These restraints have remained the main hindrances in adopting SFL in Chinese EFL and EFT. However, with students' increasingly improved English proficiency and raised awareness of the English communication function, people will put more attention and effort to adopt this new principle in English education. What's more, the Chinese educational institutions and government have never stopped their steps towards constructing a SDL-friendly environment and developing network and software related to ESL and EST for SDL. I believe with the joint efforts SDL will get more widely applied in EST and more college students will benefit from it.

Chapter IV Conclusions and Recommendations

In the 21st country, the latest information today might be out-of-date tomorrow. It will be far from sufficient for students to survive the severe competition only with the amount of knowledge learnt in school. As teachers in higher education, we expect our students to be self-directed learners and master a lifelong learning skill.

As for EFT, the new principle of cultivating students' SDL in EFL courses can meet students' and teachers' demand of getting rid of the dull traditional EST, and motivate their eagerness to learn and teach English through using English. What's more, students with SDL skills also can further their English proficiency after graduation to stand out at the increasingly globalized world. During this transformation in EFT and EFL, English teachers should realize their roles in facilitating students' SDL in ESL classes, and take full responsibilities to guide students to accomplish the transformation from learning dependently to learning independently. English teachers should return the central place to students and stand at the wings to give them sufficient support as guides, constructors, resource people, participants, counselors and supervisors. English teachers should watch the whole process for students to conduct SDL in ESL from input stage to practice stage, from setting learning purpose to assessing, and English teachers should always be there to get ready to give students support when necessary.

The experiment of adopting SDL in Chinese college students' SFL has cleared a way for Chinese EFL reform and gets welcomed by the subject students and teachers. Although the way to popularize this new teaching principles in EST in China are blocked by many restraints such as the prevailing traditional teaching principle, the insufficient assess to

computers, the shortage of teachers, etc., however, with the increased concern, support, and material input from educational institutions and government, it is sure that more and more teachers and students will benefit from the new principle of conducting SDL in EFT.

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