

## Efl Undergraduate Students Readiness of Self-Directed Learning for Writing Class

Putri Yulinda Sari<sup>1</sup>, Sabarun<sup>2</sup>, Akhmad Ali Mirza<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Program Studi Tadris Bahasa Inggris, Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Ilmu Keguruan, Institut Agama Islam Negeri Palangka Raya, Jl. G. Obos, Menteng, Kec. Jekan Raya, Kota Palangka Raya, Kalimantan Tengah  
putriyulindasari12345@gmail.com

### Abstract

The extent to which EFL writing classes have investigated the readiness for self-directed learning is limited. Writing students must ascertain their readiness to apply self-directed learning (SDL) in the writing classroom setting. The primary aim of this study is to examine the level of self-directed learning preparation among students in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing classroom. The importance of students' preparedness to engage in self-directed learning, particularly in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing, is significant. This is because higher education institutions promote active learning rather than passive learning among students. The approach employed to analyse the results is a quantitative research methodology. The findings indicate that students' preparation for self-directed learning in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing course at a higher education institution was below the average score. To assess the preparedness of EFL students, it is essential to administer a widely recognised Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale to the participants in the study. To summarise, several recommendations are proposed to emphasise the areas that can aid in the enhancement of self-directed learning for EFL students.

**Keywords:** Self-directed learning readiness, EFL, writing

### Abstrak

Cakupan kelas menulis EFL yang menyelidiki kesiapan untuk pembelajaran mandiri masih terbatas. Siswa di kelas menulis harus memastikan kesiapan mereka untuk menerapkan pembelajaran mandiri (SDL) di lingkungan kelas menulis. Tujuan utama dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menguji tingkat kesiapan pembelajaran mandiri di kalangan siswa di kelas menulis Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL). Pentingnya kesiapan siswa untuk terlibat dalam pembelajaran mandiri, khususnya dalam konteks penulisan Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL), sangatlah penting. Hal ini karena banyak perguruan tinggi lebih mengedepankan pembelajaran yang aktif dibandingkan pembelajaran yang pasif di kalangan mahasiswa. Pendekatan yang digunakan untuk menganalisis hasil penelitian adalah dengan menggunakan metodologi penelitian kuantitatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kesiapan siswa untuk belajar mandiri dalam konteks menulis Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL) di institusi pendidikan tinggi berada di bawah nilai rata-rata. Untuk menilai kesiapan siswa dalam konteks EFL, penting untuk implementasi Skala Kesiapan Belajar Mandiri (SDLRS) yang diakui secara luas bagi para peserta studi. Kesimpulannya, beberapa rekomendasi diusulkan untuk menekankan bidang-bidang yang dapat membantu peningkatan pembelajaran mandiri bagi siswa EFL.

**Kata Kunci:** Kesiapan belajar mandiri, EFL, menulis

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✉ Corresponding author: Putri Yulinda Sari

Email Address: [putriyulindasari12345@gmail.com](mailto:putriyulindasari12345@gmail.com) (Jl. G. Obos, Menteng, Kec. Jekan Raya, Kota Palangka Raya, Kalimantan Tengah)

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## INTRODUCTION

Self-directed learning also known as SDL can be defined as a series of process where the students decide to take action themselves to identify the learning needs, build learning goals, decide learning resources, choose the best suited learning strategies, as well as evaluate the learning outcomes (Knowles, 1975). These are the necessary steps in order for learners to be able to be acknowledged as ones who are able to self-direct their learning themselves. Moreover, SDL take part as a means to target the learning areas in which the learners need to learn (Walsh, 2017). Besides,

there are also main reasons as to why self-directed learning is deemed to be necessary especially in this always changing times. The foremost reason according to Walsh (2017) is that the event that happens over the past few decades which highlight the growth in knowledge. This growth in knowledge is predicted to continue. Thus, it is also even difficult for someone to keep up with its excessive growth. Besides, learners also need to become active in their learning.

This study recognized dependency of students especially on the teacher instruction in the area of writing tasks. It shows the students' own initiative is lacking especially in the practice of EFL writing among the students. The lack of promotion and limited exposure to self-directed learning among higher education students, particularly in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning environment, has not been thoroughly investigated. According to Wiley (1983), self-directed learning readiness refers to the degree at which a student possesses the necessary abilities, attitudes, and personality traits for engaging in self-directed learning. Therefore, it is imperative to assess the preparedness of students to determine their ability to effectively employ the self-directed learning approach in the essay writing class.

Self-directed learning preparedness comprises the ability to learn independently, exercise self-control, effectively manage tasks, communicate effectively, accept and benefit from constructive criticism, and evaluate one's own progress (Merriam, et al., 2006). Since SDL in among EFL students require various skills and attitudes to warrant successful autonomous learning, students need to be analyzed especially in the area of current situations and study habits. These are necessary in order to dig out students' readiness to implement self-directed learning in the writing class.

Currently, self-directed learning is frequently employed as a strategy to engage learners in independent learning activities that can be tailored to their individual pace. Autonomy is a critical factor in self-directed learning (SDL), in contrast to the traditional learning setting where teachers use an autocratic approach in the classroom (Lounsbury et al., 2009). Simultaneously, writing skills are considered to be one of the essential competencies in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Writing skills are frequently assessed and utilised as a key measure in evaluations and exams (Hafizah Adnan & Sayadi, 2021). On top of that, writing skills can also be said to serve as an essential element of communication. The examples serve personal, academic, or professional purposes. Given the focus on essay writing in the current study, it is evident that this aligns with the academic objectives in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, particularly in higher education.

Students, particularly at the higher education level, are expected to possess the ability to independently guide their own learning. Regarding to this, it is also important to underline that university cannot merely be satisfied to work as instrumental knowledge transmitter, however it is also expected that it is able to generate innovation in the professions (Serdà & Alsina, 2018). Although in this respect, universities can also help in giving extrinsic motivation such as providing positive campus environment, it is also notable to find the best way to encourage them to self-direct their process in learning (Douglass & Morris, 2014). Then, when students feel motivated to succeed,

they will more likely do better in high cognitive tasks performance (Flint & Johnson, 2011). Thus, it will result in students' successfulness during their academic years.

As stated by Serdà & Alsina (2018), students will utilise self-directed learning methods to construct new cognitive frameworks during the training process. To attain this objective, students must establish the crucial steps necessary to autonomously guide their own learning. Therefore, it is evident that self-directed learning is an essential competency in various domains, particularly for developing proficiency in essay writing within the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Writing often times requires independent practice and effort outside of class. Thus, self-directed learning ability is important in writing. Besides, writing skill are highly valued in many fields and thus it might have broader implications for learning and development beyond the context of EFL.

Regarding this issue, there exists a disparity between the theoretical processes outlined for students to follow in self-directed learning and the actual phenomenon observed in practice. For students to effectively guide their own learning, they must develop and familiarise themselves with essential components of self-directed learning, including self-control, self-management, and a strong motivation to study (Garrison, 1997). To begin with, it is imperative to assess the preparedness of EFL students in adopting self-directed learning in the context of the essay writing class. Given the limited examination into self-directed learning preparation in essay writing classes, particularly in the setting of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), this study aims to determine if EFL higher education students possess the necessary readiness for self-directed learning to effectively implement it in an essay writing class.

Self-Directed Learning (SDL) is linked with adult learning. This concept was first bloomed in the mid-1970s. The early initiator of SDL term was Knowles in 1975. He defines self-directed learning as the act of individuals proactively identifying their learning needs, setting learning goals, finding learning resources, employing suitable learning strategies, and evaluating the results of their own learning. Self-directed learners should assume accountability for their own learning, whether with or without external assistance. Hence, the learning planning is up to the learners themselves to suit the best for their own preferences when it comes to learning.

In 1997, Garrison established the concept of self-directed learning. He defines self-directed learning as "an approach where learners are motivated to assume personal responsibility and collaborative control of the cognitive (self-monitoring) and contextual (self-management) processes in constructing and confirming meaningful and worthwhile learning outcomes". He asserts that the concepts of meaningfulness and worthwhileness encompass the cognitive and social aspects of an educational experience. He stated that a collaborative perspective involves individuals accepting responsibility for generating meaning and including others in validating valuable knowledge.

On top of that, learners will get used to the process of organizing the right sequences to lead the learning with the benefits it entails. Consequently, the learners will have the opportunity to refine their essential self-directed learning abilities. Self-directed learners possess qualities such as self-

management, self-monitoring, and self-modification (Costa & Kallick, 2004). Self-managing in self-directed learning refers to actively engaging in the learning process while being aware of the desired learning objectives, necessary resources, and leveraging prior experiences. While self-monitoring can be identified as the ability to employ the right strategies when it comes to assess the learning. Lastly, self-modifying is referred as utilizing the knowledge for assessing and constructing prior experience for learning tasks. As a result, self-directed learning skills are bound to develop through progressive stages of growth (George et al., 2021).

### ***Autonomy in SDL***

Self-directed learning pushes learner to become an active learner (Walsh, 2017). Instead of being a passive student, which might be seen as not truly learning, it is beneficial to adopt the position of an active learner in one's own learning process. In addition, learners will cultivate their own comprehension in the subject matter by actively participating in activities rather than passively assimilating the provided knowledge. Therefore, it is imperative to acquire the ability to seek knowledge and develop self-directed learning skills, particularly at a young age.

On the other hand, critical reflection is part of the Self-Directed Learning. It can help learners to adopt the transformation with learning expectations. Students are required to actively engage and take initiative in the learning process, rather than simply receiving information passively. Consequently, it will foster a substantial comprehension of the material acquired during the learning process. Therefore, learning should emphasise the personal development of learners, encompassing the aspects of learning as transformation, learning as integration, learning as action, and learning as firsthand encounter (du Toit-Brits, 2018). So, in order for learning to reach students' full potential, it should connect students' experiences, lives, and emotions (Johnson, 2012).

The capacity of students to independently guide their own learning is associated with advanced cognitive skills, including critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving (Tekkol & Demirel, 2018). On top of that, according to Tekkol & Demirel (2018), the academic achievement of pupils is intricately connected to their ability to engage in self-directed learning. As a result, it is deemed to be important to employ SDL skills among EFL especially in higher education. Higher education works as the first step before entering adult life.

### ***SDL and Higher Education***

Self-directed learning is also connected to adult learning. It can be seen and traced back on adult learning theories in the late 1040s and 1950s (Manning & Manning, 2007). Based on this adult learning early theory, adult learners make use the factors such as motivational, emotional, and perceptual systems in order to resist learning with the exception of the environment is safe to do so. In summary, it can be said that learning can be either safe or unsafe. Knowles (1975) suggested that adult education will have a high chance of success in situations where they feel highly motivated, in which where learning has practical applications and they are able to participate in that learning process themselves. Hence, university can be used as the means to train the learners who are at the

end will be the adults to hone and refine their self-directed learning skills. A formal setting atmosphere serves as a conducive space for training learners, where they are aware of the expectations placed upon them and receive valuable feedback from instructors, classmates, and the institution during their learning process. Thus, formal setting environment should be able to go beyond knowledge transmission to helping learners to direct and manage the learning they need. Again, the several process of self-directed learning should be faced by learners. In order to help learners in engaging themselves in self-directed learning, it can be done by decreasing amounts of assistance as a way to improve learning with the result of learners will gain more competence dealing with the self-directed learning process.

### ***SDL in EFL Writing Context***

According to EFL experts Hafizah Adnan and Sayadi (2021), writing is a crucial language proficiency. To elaborate, writing can be defined as a very efficient method of acquiring knowledge. The process commences with the generation of ideas and the collection of pertinent material, culminating in the production of a finalised manuscript that is prepared for publication. Moreover, writing serves as a method of conveying information, engaging in debates, and engaging in cognitive processes, as the writer's ideas and written expression become intertwined upon commencing the act of writing (Hyland, 2018). Therefore, writing is intricately linked to students' emotions and convictions, encompassing their aptitude for writing and written language assignments.

According to Hidayati (2018), writing and speaking are considered productive skills, whereas listening and reading are classified as receptive skills. Bowker (2007) asserts that writing is a necessary skill in several life contexts, including the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) setting. It is crucial to acknowledge the significance of writing, as several English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors have challenges when it comes to teaching writing (Thuy, 2009). There are challenges found when it comes to teaching writing for EFL learners. As the result, it cannot be expected that the responsibility of success in writing for EFL students is limited to teacher. Students must possess the capacity to independently assume responsibility for directing their own learning in the domain of writing. Therefore, the capacity to engage in self-directed learning is crucial, particularly for students studying English as a foreign language, in order to enhance their writing skills. As addition, in higher education environment, skills in writing are deemed useful since it is used by students to argue their stance (Sabarun, et. al., 2023). The writing skills should be earned by students and the effort to obtain the skills can be supported by self-directed learning of the students.

## **METHODS**

The method used in the present study was quantitative research approach. In addition, the current study employed a descriptive quantitative research approach. Given that the objective of this study is to investigate the participants' preparedness for self-directed learning, it is considered suitable to employ a quantitative research approach.

The population of this study consisted of undergraduate students in the English Education study programme who were enrolled in the Essay Writing class and were learning English as a foreign language (EFL). The sample comprised 26 students enrolled in the English Education study programme who were enrolled in the Essay Writing class. The choosing of this total of sample was deemed appropriate since it was almost half of the total population.

In the present study, the data collection employment was survey method using questionnaire. This is a commonly used data collection method in survey research. Questionnaires can be administered in person, online, or via mail, depending on the research study. As for the present study, the questionnaire was administered through online form.

The instrument for the present study was a survey by distributing questionnaire. The most widely recognised evaluation linked to SDL is the Self-directed Learning Readiness Scale (SDLRS) created by Guglielmino (1977). Thus, the present study adapted the SDLRS instrument to fit the current main objective of the study that deals with EFL students' SDL readiness in writing. The Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale is a 5-point Likert scale that consists of statements pertaining to one's readiness for self-directed learning. However, since it was adapted to the writing class situation, there were some changes to fit the goal of present study. Thus, when the data had been gathered, it was analyzed to see the result.

The data collected from the questionnaire were initially analysed using a spreadsheet to get the score. The data were aggregated and compared to the levels of self-directed learning preparedness, namely below average, average, and above average. The statistical software IBM SPSS Statistic 26 was utilised to do further analysis on the mean, median, and mode of participants with medium and high levels of self-directedness.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The participants who participated in the present research were from one of a higher education institution in Palangkaraya. There was the total of 26 students who filled the distributed questionnaire. The students who were chosen as the participants are those who took Essay Writing class.

The current study aimed to examine the level of self-directed learning readiness (SDLRS) among undergraduate students studying English as a foreign language (EFL) who were enrolled in an Essay Writing class. Descriptive statistics were employed to analyse the SDLRS scores. The scores on the SDLRS scale varied from 58 to 290. According to the research conducted by Guglielmino and Guglielmino in 2008, self-directed learning readiness may be categorised into three levels: below average, with a score range of 58-201; average, with a score range of 202-226; and above average, with a score range of 227-290. The analysis of the SDLRS is displayed in Table 1:

“Table 1. SDLRS Interpretation, the Score Range, and the Explanation”

SDLRS Score Range	Explanation
58-201	Below average
202-226	Average
227-290	Above average

Guglielmino (1978) found that persons with high SDLRS scores typically have a preference for independently identifying their learning needs and autonomously designing and executing their learning process. However, this does not imply that individuals will never opt for an organised educational environment. Individuals have the option to select either conventional courses or workshops as components of their learning strategy. Conversely, those with moderate SDLRS scores may excel in autonomous circumstances, but might not possess complete confidence in managing the entire process of recognising their learning requirements and strategizing and executing their learning. Individuals who have lower than normal SDLRS scores typically have a preference for highly organised learning methods, such as lectures and traditional classroom environments. Thus, to answer the level of self-directed learning readiness among higher education students in EFL essay writing class, descriptive statistics for SDLRS scores were used. The scores range between 58-290. The Table 2 below displays the descriptive statistics for the self-directed learning readiness scale score.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of SDLRS Score Among the Participants”

		TOTAL
N	Statistic	26
Range	Statistic	22
Minimum	Statistic	58
Maximum	Statistic	80
Sum	Statistic	1767
Mean	Statistic	67.96
Std. Deviation	Statistic	6.21
Variance	Statistic	38.60
Skewness	Statistic	0.46
	Std. Error	0.46
Kurtosis	Statistic	-0.48
	Std. Error	0.89

According to the data presented in Table 2, the total scores of the Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale vary from 58 to 80. From the total of N=26, standard deviation and variance respectively are 6.21 and 38.60. Additionally, with the mean score of 67.96, it can be considered that the SDLRS among the participants is on the level of below average.

Since the level of self-directed learning readiness among EFL students who took Essay Writing class are below the average, it is clear that the students are not fully ready to implement self-directed learning in the writing class. Furthermore, based on this outcome, it can be deduced that the insufficient level of self-directedness in self-directed learning among the EFL students hinders the effectiveness of EFL essay writing instruction. From the total of the 26 participants who took the questionnaire, the result is not satisfactory where the mean score 67.69.

On the other hand, students with an average level of self-directedness can be said to almost becoming self-directed learners (Williamson, 2007). Although, it still necessary to underline that students need to identify and assess some areas in order for improvement. On top of that, according to Adnan & Sayadi (2021), some strategies as well as teacher's guidance, if necessary, might also need to be adopted together in order for improvement. Accordingly, students with self-directedness in high level need to maintain the learning progress. Students may seek efficient and appropriate strategies to enhance their self-directed learning abilities.

To achieve success in the learning process, students must possess the ability to learn autonomously, demonstrate initiative in seeking more resources, and effectively meet assignment deadlines. According to Durr, Guglielmino, and Guglielmino (1997), self-directed learning is a viable and efficient substitute for classroom learning in many circumstances.

The readiness of students to engage in self-directed learning can have an impact on their achievement in learning. Students that possess a strong inclination towards self-directed learning are more likely to effectively attain their learning objectives. Conversely, those with a limited level of self-directed learning skills are unable to accomplish this task. It is crucial to inform students about the impact of self-directed learning preparation on themselves. In addition, it is crucial for them to understand the primary elements that have the most impact on their self-directed learning level and determine effective strategies to address these factors.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study assessed the self-directed learning readiness (SDLR) of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) undergraduate students who enrolled in an Essay Writing course at a higher education institution in Palangkaraya. The findings indicated that undergraduate students at IAIN Palangkaraya campus exhibited a subpar level of self-directed learning readiness skills (SDLRs).

According to the results, the study recommended that educational institutions and teachers adopt the Staged-Self Directed Learning (SSDL) technique developed by Grow (1991). It is helpful in order for students to easily adapt to self-directed learning approach.

Furthermore, it is imperative to establish a consultation and monitoring programme for students, as over fifty percent of the student population exhibits a self-directed learning readiness that falls below the average level. Therefore, it is crucial to assess the extent of students' self-directed learning readiness (SDLR) and improve SDLR investigations, specifically focusing on strategies to



effectively address the primary variables that contribute to low levels of self-directed learning. This will help ensure a comprehensive approach to self-directed learning in future study.

Just like most of other studies, the present study also has limitation. The focus is mostly on the research methodology employed in the study. Due to the exclusive use of a quantitative research approach and survey data collection procedure in this study, the findings may lack a comprehensive explanation. Hence, to acquire a comprehensive comprehension of the present matter, it is suggested that the future researchers who investigate the similar problem might try to employ qualitative approach for gaining rich and new insight of the current matter.

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