

# **EFL LEARNER'S SELF –REGULATED LEARNING STRATEGIES IN ACHIEVING AN EXCELLENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

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## **Abstract**

The study investigated strategies employed by a successful student taking on his undergraduate degree in one of the best universities in Makassar. The purpose of the study is to increase understanding and knowledge of self-regulated learning and regulation strategies as part of the affective factors of EFL Learning. The study which was a single case was investigated by using qualitative approach. Data was collected through technology assisted interview practicing an open ended conversation and questions. The result of analysis revealed that he utilized the following types of strategies to perform his self-regulation : a) forethought phase for example, setting academic goal, planning, keeping self-efficacy, keeping motivation; b) performance phase, such as, organizing, seeking information, keeping records and monitoring, structuring environment; b) self-reflection phase, such as, self consequences, seeking social assistance, reviewing records, and self evaluation.

**Keywords:** self-regulation, SRL strategies, motivation, achievement, self-efficacy, metacognition.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Studying on self-regulated learning has been increasing recently in many areas of education, including learning English as a foreign language. However, the study has not been extensively explored in various higher education contexts in Indonesia. English as a foreign language in Indonesia gives learners more challenges and needs them to capitalize on both their cognitive and metacognitive hemisphere, such as, self regulation and independence. Therefore, the researcher finds it very important to look at the study of self regulation from different angles.

Following to this, the researcher has tried to select a student who had an outstanding academic performance. He had been very well known in his batch because not only did he have a privilege academic merit but also actively participated in ranges of English competition, organization and some social activities. In addition, at the end of his academic year, he was also awarded as one of the best graduate in the university.

Basically, it is undeniable that I choose this topic because it is an area where I am interested in. I am fond of telling someone's good things especially prominent achievement. I also assume that he might have inspired or persuaded a lot of students to do the same as he has done or even better. Regarding the significance of the study, it is also noted that in some respects; giving a detail account of the topic will have benefits to other students who are taking undergraduate degree of education and in gaining an excellent academic achievement in terms of strategic activities to achieve learning goals. It also may benefit to teachers in relation to have an insight which can be shared to their students and may increase their understanding of self-regulation which is important to their career and professional development. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to increase understanding and knowledge of self-regulated learning and regulation in learning English as a foreign language and which mainly focuses on developing students' personal signature which in turns may drive to

flourish. The research question of this research is what self-regulated learning strategies does Mr. Fir employ to achieve his learning goals?

## **SELF REGULATION**

According to Zimmerman (2008), Self-regulation is closely related to self-generated thoughts, feeling, and action to achieve one's goals. In addition, self-regulated learners are regarded as individuals who proactively instead of reactively set about their learning tasks which means that they demonstrate perseverance, personal initiatives and adaptive skills that come from their motivational beliefs and propitious metacognitive strategies. He also added that it is not a specific ability or trait, but is more a belief and motivation possessed by somebody. Therefore, ones cannot achieve their goals without having motivation to make use all of the phases in self-regulation which covers forethought, performance (volitional control), and self-reflection. Conceptually, self-regulation is basically derived from Bandura's triadic perspectives which mentioned that individual, behaviours and environment are factors determining one's self-regulation. Self-regulation process is cyclical because feedback which is from prior performance will be employed to settle a new strategy. Throughout the learning process, personal, behavioural and environment factors will also be adjusted and changed (Boekarts, Pentrich&Zeiden, 2000).

Not only is self-regulation crucial for people who work in a certain field of work, but it is also substantial for any branch of expertise, including educational practitioners or learners, sport and art (Collins & Durand-Bush, 2014). According to Zimmerman as sited in Cohen (2012), everyone has capability of self-regulation to an extent. For instances, Mike Tyson's life journey, he seemed like uneducated person due to his controversial social behaviours in his communities, such as, violent acts, rude words, etc. Yet, he was a champion of the world heavy weight class, and defended the title for a decade. That was just the result of his great effort to regulate himself in order to achieve his goal which accidentally came

from his heart when he was watching another greatest boxer Muhammad Ali. Self-regulation can be seen as the predictor of some one's achievement and goals (Zumlun, Tadlock & Roberts, 2011). Therefore, the ability to self-regulate is very important for any level of learners, particularly students who learn in higher education because they are confronted with a great deal learning material, some task, and other part time activities in a short span of time.

Somehow, to be a self-regulated learner is not an easy case. It has been found that some students are successful self-regulators and others are not (Peveryly, Brobst, Graham & Shaw, 2003). What makes different between one's self-regulation and others is their quality and quantity of their self-regulatory process (Collins & Durand-Bush, 2014). According to Kitsantas, Steen & Huie (2009), some learners find themselves inconsistent in terms of their self-regulation because they have not been able to regularly practice some points which are regarded as a determining factors to become a self-regulator, such as, high motivation, meta cognitive awareness or strategy and locus of control or self-efficacy.

A lot of study has classified motivation into two main types, intrinsic which is seen as inherent to the self or task, and extrinsic motivation which is derived from outside of the self or the task (Corpus, McClintic-Gilbert & Hayenga, 2009). It has also been found by various researches that intrinsic motivation and students' grade scores have positive relationship in some extent. Intrinsically motivated learners have some typical signatures; they seem like having engagement with the material, enjoying the learning process, and employing deep learning strategies; or involving regular task completion, cognitive engagement, and higher learning outcomes (Corpus, McClintic-Gilbert, Wormington, Haimovitz, 2013). On the other hand, extrinsically motivated learners tend to adopt even superficial learning strategy which does not promote high learning achievement, only focus on how to complete learning tasks without high expectation of success. Therefore, self-regulation is fairly closely related to motivation.

Self-regulated learners are also characterized by employing metacognitive strategies. Metacognition refers to ability to improve learning achievement or gaining learning goals by understanding own learning process through which prior knowledge, experience, motivation, self-efficacy are consciously converged (Flavell, 1976, as cited in Arslan& Akin, 2014). They also said that metacognitive strategy as part of self-regulation has a positively strong correlation with learning goal achievement. Somehow, all of these combinations, to make it work maximally, have to be practiced regularly in order to become a learning habit (Banas, Lopes, Mellado, & Ruiz, 2009). Meanwhile, learners are sometimes associated with the absence of metacognitive strategies and low motivation if they tend to be passive in classroom activities.

It has been proven that self-efficacy is seen as one of the most vital components of self-regulation process in learning (Lee, Lee, Bong, 2014). Yancey (2014)says,“Self-efficacy is a person’s belief that he or she can (or cannot) successfully organize and execute an action to achieve a desired outcome in a particular situation”. According to Bandura as cited in Yancey (2014), the way person approaches a goal or task is strongly influenced by his or her self-efficacy. A number of studies have researched the correlation of self-efficacy and other constructs and students’ academic achievement. Most of studies have shown that there is a tight connection between academic self-regulation, academic self-efficacy, grade goals and achievements (Lee, Lee, Bong, 2014).

As such, self-regulated learners are motivated to improve and in order to achieve their goals, they have to understand which parts of their weaknesses need to improve and know how these can be carried out (Toering, Elferink-Gemser, Jonker, van Heuvelen&Visscher, 2012). It has been advised that there are some features of good self-regulated learners, according to Etmer& Newby as cited in Toering, Elferink-Gemser, Jonker, Heuvelen&Visscher, 2012, which cover: a) they, in advance of their actions, *plan* how to

approach a task; b). During the task performance, they self-monitor their improvement; c) an evaluation of process and outcome is undertaken after they execute their plan; d) they give reflection on the learning process during the cyclical stages of plan, self-monitor and evaluation, which means that they practice their knowledge and add the number of strategies that can be employed which in turn may give more possible approaches to accomplish future tasks.

Zimmerman (2000) argued that the quality and quantity of self-regulation process are considered as the indicator of effective and ineffective self-regulation. There are three phases of self-regulation in line with socio-cognitive perspectives, including, (a) forethought, (b) performance, (c) and self-reflection. In the forethought phase, setting goals is made up by individuals and creating some strategies in order to attain the goals is also a part of the stage. These strategies will require certain aspect of self which will help advancing effectiveness, such as, thought, controlling feeling and directing task execution. It means that every task needs specific strategy which may not be working at all for another task. Zimmerman (2000) pointed out that the individual dynamic of contextual circumstances has led to always adjust strategies and goals that want to be achieved. Moreover, he commented that during this phase, individuals should keep up their self-motivational beliefs to gain set goals because without motivation to reach the goals, strategic and regulatory skills are not meaningful. Therefore, principal aspects of the phase are intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, outcome expectation and goal-orientation (Zimmerman, 2000).

In performance phase, self-control and self-observation are the main characteristics. Self-control refers to individual's endeavour in such a way that he/she can focus on the task and direct her effort by undertaking strategies that have been arranged in previous phase (Zimmerman, 2000; 2002). Meanwhile, self-observation refers to an attempt to evaluate or track individual's learning performance as well as to identify outcomes originated from these

attempts. There are some typical self-observation strategies, such as, self-recording and self-monitoring.

The self-reflection phase or the last phase is featured by self-evaluative processes, particularly self-reaction and self-judgment (Schunk, 2001). As cited in Nesbit (2012), Dewey (1933) explained reflection as “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusion to which it leads” (p.118). Students, after performing the second phase, collect data which can be used as a comparison against some other standards. To illustrate, individuals with the data collected may compare their current performance with their prior, or compare their performance with other classmates’. According to Salomon and Perkins (2002), as cited in Nesbit (2012), with self-reflection, students will be helped to review own personal functioning in the group, understand how their strategies used during their learning might be re-performed, and reframe or connect new knowledge or contents that were taught to prior comprehension. The result of the self-evaluation will be used to concentrate on subsequent self-regulatory process in forethought phase. Positive or negative self-reaction is crucial because individuals are affected by either of each reaction in looking up the future attempts (Zimmerman, 2011).

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The research method I used to answer my research question was a qualitative case study approach in which a single case study design was practiced. According to Remennyi (2012) “ A case study may be defined as an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context in which multiple sources of evidence are used”. Meanwhile, a single case study design can be seen as a single person being used in a case study by looking at things over time or diachronically (Ribbs, 2012). In this study, I

looked at experiences of self-regulation and SRL strategies that was performed by the participant.

It was based on what I wanted to write according to my interest and significances would be perceived by answering the question. Moreover, it also made possible for me to compose a deep and rich description of a case being studied. Due to the fact that it was a single case, I only used the subject as my data source or participant. In terms of data collection, I mainly focused on some approaches, such as, interview via online, collecting important document, and photographs and journals.

In the interview setting, I did this informally and in most of the time I used some instrument to help collecting the data, such as, camera, cell-phones and IT tools. There were a number of questions that should be answered, for instance, “when you are in the beginning of a learning activity, are you always motivated to engage in?”. In addition, during the interview, it was an open-ended conversation in which random questions could be asked. The length of interview varied and was withdrawn if the interviewer was assuming that the data had been completely collected. English spoken language was used during conversation and process of data collection. Meeting with the subject was projected as many as five to ten meetings with different topic of questions. Some of the interview took place in the subject’s environment and made use technology-aided interview, such as, on-line chat and E-Mail. To support primary data, some document was collected, including, rubrics, personal journal, academic transcript or certificates of rewards.

During the data analysis process, I did some stages of activities. I examined and re-examined all of the data collected in order to be able to integrate some related information and to produce groups of themes. Generally, qualitative data analysis can be done into some steps, including, organizing, categorizing, analysing and interpreting the data. The four activities were undertaken accordingly and systematically.



## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Findings**

The result session details the self-regulated strategies that he employed to complete his learning tasks. This shows that he has attempted a wide range of efforts to drive himself to successfulness in terms of academic achievement. Table 1 provides a summary of strategies he used to regulate himself so as to reach his academic goal (ex. forethought, performance and self-reflection phases). To illustrate the findings, I cover some citations. Moreover, I also use a wide range of literature to link the results and to enable effective discussion in response to unique or general found strategies in line with self-regulation.

#### **1. Forethought Phase**

He has used a number of strategies in order to assist himself reaching his academic goal. In forethought stage, planning activities covers planning or setting learning goals, keeping self-efficacy, and motivation. It can be identified that he has planned or set his goal prior to commence on the next stage.

He said ““...I always have my own plan and timeline, what to do in the first two weeks, in the middle, and in the final stage..”(Interviewed on 5<sup>th</sup> of September, 2017).

In addition, he also said ““..I did not set my academic goal in the form of score or GPA, but it’s merely like how good I understand what I have learnt and how to share them”. (Interviewed on 5<sup>th</sup> of September, 2017).

Moving on to self-efficacy, he has responded confidently to relevant questions. It can be seen that he possess high self-efficacy.

He said ““...I firmly believe myself that I am a fast learner, able to catch up any stuff even though I have prior knowledge or experience..”(Interviewed on 7<sup>th</sup> of September, 2017).

I found some responses which relates to self-motivation. It shows that he is more intrinsically motivated learner rather than extrinsically.

He said ““...I am always enthusiastic to attend the class..”. and also said “...I do love and enjoy what I have chosen, that's English and being a teacher”. (Interviewed on 7<sup>th</sup> of September, 2017).

His comment about setting goal, self-efficacy, and motivation indicates that he has carefully managed his study in order to get successfully through the next phases.

## **2. Performance Phase**

In this phase, he commented on his metacognitive strategies and awareness, efforts and aspects to concern about his study progression. I have identified some strategies in terms of performing actions, which includes, organizing and transforming, seeking information, keeping monitors and records, and environmentally structuring.

He said "...I make mind mapping and manage my time on which chapters or related journal to read prior to the assignment work". (Interviewed on 7<sup>th</sup> of September, 2017).

The statement above shows that he is organized in arranging his instructional materials to improve learning. He is also active in seeking information as part of metacognitive awareness and of non-social resources in order to secure his further assignment.

He said "...Prior to the class, I always read the suggested readings and I spend most time in conducive environment...". (Interviewed on 7<sup>th</sup> of September, 2017).

With respect to his self-monitoring, I found some statement which indicates that he has kept monitoring and recording, as part of self-initiated effort, to ensure that he has been on the right path.

He said "...I wrote everything in my agenda including activities that I should take, Yes, I still keep my note and agenda for the last two years..." "...I take notes as summary of the topic..." "...that I stick on my timelines, when to edit my paper". (Interviewed on 7<sup>th</sup> of September, 2017).

Another strategy he used is by concerning his environment. how to structure his environment or physical setting to make his study easier is not very substantial factor for him as long as he can concentrate on what he is doing.

He said "...I mostly study individually..", "...I enjoy every situation both in library where no noises or anywhere i can actually read, do my task..". (Interviewed on 7<sup>th</sup> of September, 2017).

### 3. Self-Reflection Phase

In this phase, he told about his behaviour as a reflection to the outcome of the set task. The result shows that there are four strategies he used in relation to his self-reflection, including, self-consequences, seeking social assistance, reviewing records, self-evaluation.

As part of self-reflection, he is always encouraged to seek assistance from somebody else who is more knowledgeable.

He said “..I am actively doing consultation and discussion with respective lecturers or seniors”... “..I ask my friends to read my paper as to cross check about some points, especially for my grammar and wording things...”. (Interviewed on 7<sup>th</sup> of September, 2017).

I found an interesting comment about her habitual action he does when he has finished his school assignment.

He said “..I have a kind of celebration routine, either I have accomplished great work or every after hectic academic time is over, I always play game or go to beaches with my best friend”. (Interviewed on 7<sup>th</sup> of September, 2017).

He also gives more time to read notes taken from class meeting and feedback given by his lecturer.

He said ““...but, I learn all of the feedback given by my lecturer and read it before taking a test..”.

He also said ““..I always double check before submitting it”. (Interviewed on 7<sup>th</sup> of September, 2017).

### Discussion

The finding reflects on Zimmerman’s model of social cognitive self-regulation which collaborates three classes of determinants which are separable, yet each of which is interdependent (Puustinen&Pulkkinen, 2001).The result identifies that the participant has used various strategies of self-regulation, which is implicitly made up of the cyclical phases of self-regulation. According Zimmerman (1986), students who used various self-regulation strategies tended to be successful in their academic achievement. In relation to forethought phase which illustrates the process that proceed and prepare actions, he at least employed four SRL strategies (setting academic goal, planning actions, building self-efficacy, and keeping

up motivation). Setting academic goal and planning actions have been mentioned as a process relating to task analysis, while of self-efficacy and motivation is linked to self-motivation beliefs (Puustinen&Pulkkinen, 2001). He set his academic goal in any level courses taken, planned what to do in every phase of study, believed in himself that he can accomplish the task as well as encouraged himself to always get motivated as a commitment to learn. Zimmerman, Bandura and Martinez-Ponds (1992) said that academic goals and academic achievement are influenced by students' beliefs in their efficacy for self-regulated learning and self-efficacy for academic attainment.

Self-control and self-observation, which are recognized as processes involved in the second phase have also been practiced by the subject by applying various strategies. For example, he organizes materials to be read prior to task work, spends times for seeking useful information in libraries, keeps recording anything relating task, such as, note taking, in agenda as well as structures supportive learning environment. According to Zimmerman (1990), student's self-control and self-observation are the result of processes generated from self-initiated activities by proactively attempted to seek out profit from learning which in turn have successfully improved students' learning responses toward any negative environmental factor. An assumption that the subject has been experiencing a number of academic successfulness so as to achieve academic goal is not something new and difficult for him.

In terms of self-reflection, as mentioned that the participant employed some strategies as effort to create new understanding and knowledge of his learning, to review the whole learning process, as well as to figure out in what ways his problem solving strategies can be reapplied. It has been found that regardless of students' study domains, self-reflection is strongly associated with their academic achievement. One of ways he promotes hisself-reflection was that he sometimes created reflective journal writing. According to Lew (2011),

this approach has been a broad consensus that reflective journal writing improves students' self-evaluation and reflection.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

In sum, the study has been investigated with purposes to increase knowledge and understanding of self-regulation strategies and practices. The study is simply a pilot project, yet expected to bring up positive contribution toward flourishing. The results of the study provides preliminary evidence on what an undergraduate student may perform to lead an outstanding academic achievement or merit, learning objectives, active social participation and strong social relationship. The study shed light on strategies students may use to set their learning goals (forethought phase), to perform their learning tasks, and to reflect what have been and will be undergone to achieve current and future goals (Zimmerman, 2000). Consequently, strategies that were used by the subject in this study, including planning, keeping up self-efficacy and motivation, seeking information and keeping monitoring, giving self-consequences, etc, may function as starting point for other undergraduate students aiming to gain successful academic and social lives.

It is emphasized again that students must employ self-regulated learning strategies to attain learning goals. Interestingly, the study has found a number of strategies used by the student who fully focused on his studies. It seems that the future research would focus on study of self-regulation strategies employed by some students to improve their English skills.

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