THE CONTRIBUTION OF SELF-REGULATED LEARNING IN SHAPING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

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ABSTRACT

The study addressed the influence of self-regulated learning (SRL) in English language learning. It involved 23 high school students attending a private school in Surabaya. The school implements bilingual language usage, incorporating both English and Indonesian. Therefore, most of the students demonstrated high fluency in English, as evidenced by their effortless communication during class activities. The students completed a scale and open-ended questionnaire regarding self-regulated learning and participated in an English proficiency test. The data were analysed using simple regression analysis. The finding suggests that self-regulated learning did not predict students' English proficiency. Instead, according to students' open-ended responses, the study found that students' English proficiency was highly influenced by their exposure to the language naturally without structured learning strategies. Future studies should explore a more thorough assessment of students' self-regulated learning levels and their connection with English proficiency, particularly in similar contexts.

Keywords: English proficiency, language exposure, learning strategy, self-regulated learning (SRL).

INTRODUCTION

Since the middle of the 20th century, there has been a significant transformation in the education system, with a fundamental shift towards individuals taking responsibility for their own education (Gardner, 1963, as cited in Zimmerman, 1990). This transition has given rise to the concept of self-regulated learning (SRL), which emphasizes students taking control and mastering their own learning (Zimmerman, Barry; Schunk, 2008). Furthermore, the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud) is currently promoting "Merdeka Belajar" or "Freedom of Learning." This initiative places a strong emphasis on the concept of SRL, which allows students to learn at their own pace (Wahyudin, 2020). In this curriculum, teachers play the role of facilitators rather than primary sources of information. Given its crucial role in the Kurikulum Merdeka, SRL has become a more relevant topic to address.

In the context of language learning, SRL takes on particular significance. This is because when learners solely rely on what they are taught in the classroom, their target language exposure is limited (Kormos & Csizér, 2014). Therefore, it is crucial for learners to take the initiative in acquiring skills beyond the classroom and implementing SRL strategies. Although learning strategy is indeed essential in language learning (Nyikos & Oxford, 1993), not all strategies for language learning fall under the category of self-regulated learning strategy (Wang & Bai, 2017). Zimmerman has characterized self-regulated learning strategies as purposeful actions undertaken by a learner to acquire information or skills (B. Zimmerman, 1990). He categorized the SRL process into three phases: forethought, performance, and self-reflection. The forethought phase involves processes and beliefs occurring prior to learning activities; the performance phase includes processes during the implementation of behaviors, while self-reflection pertains to processes occurring after learning (B. J. Zimmerman, 2002). Through the use of self-regulation strategies, learners develop the ability to plan their learning, select suitable cognitive and metacognitive techniques, and assess their own progress (Seker, 2016). These strategies empower learners to set more effective goals, use more efficient learning methods, monitor and evaluate their progress more effectively, create a conducive learning environment, seek help when needed, invest greater effort and perseverance, and establish more effective new goals when they have achieved their current ones (Zimmerman, Barry; Schunk, 2008).

The previous study findings suggest that SRL is a strong predictor of success in acquiring a foreign language and is closely associated with English proficiency (Bai & Wang, 2023; Guo et al., 2023; Seker, 2016). Related studies also indicate that students who exhibit effective self-regulation in their English EFL or ESL studies are more likely to attain favorable outcomes in English language learning (Cho & Kim, 2019) and encounter fewer challenges during the learning process (Schwam et al., 2021). Furthermore, SRL plays a significant role in enhancing students' English reading comprehension (Li & Gan, 2022), writing (Sun & Wang, 2020; Teng & Zhang, 2018), and speaking performance (Uztosun, 2021). Additionally, latent profile analysis studies reveal that higher-achieving language learners employ a more diverse range of SRL strategies (J. Chen et al., 2023; X. Chen et al., 2020). An unexpected finding emerged from Wang et al. (2013) research, which investigated self-efficacy beliefs and SRL strategies in English language acquisition among 160 German and 200 Chinese college students. The results revealed a positive correlation between the application of SRL strategies and English language test scores among Chinese students, while the correlation was negative for German students. One possible explanation is that the QESRLS, designed for Chinese students, may not accurately gauge the utilization of SRL strategies among German students, possibly due to linguistic, social, and cultural differences. Another perspective is that German students may employ distinct English self-regulated learning strategies compared to Chinese students. It could also be linked to how English is taught in German and Chinese classrooms, as these learning strategies depend on the context and environment (Wang et al., 2013).

Ultimately, the studies discussed above have highlighted SRL's impact on students' proficiency in English. Nevertheless, there remains a need to confirm those findings within the Indonesian EFL context (Melvina & Julia, 2021). Moreover, the majority of studies on self-regulated learning have predominantly concentrated on participants from primary schools, universities, and teachers. High school students, especially in a foreign language setting, have been underrepresented in these studies (Chong & Reinders, 2022). Therefore, this research seeks to establish whether a positive correlation exists between SRL and English proficiency, particularly in the high school context.

METHOD

The study adopted the embadded correlational design, employing both quantitative and qualitative methods to collect data (Creswell & Clark, 2007). Qualitative data, however, served only a complementary role within the overall design. The study was conducted among high school students at a private bilingual school in Surabaya, where English is used for daily learning. As a result, most students demonstrated a significant level of English proficiency, which was evident in their seamless communication during class activities. This study employed convenience sampling as the method for selecting research participants, ensuring voluntary participation from each individual within the population. This research adhered to ethical standards by emphasizing the absence of coercion for student involvement. The total number of research samples obtained was 23 high school students, spanning grades 10-12. It is noteworthy that the total population of high school students at this private school was 34 students.

A questionnaire was employed to assess students' SRL in English language acquisition. The questionnaire is divided into three sections – the first for participant identification, the second containing scales to collect data on students' SRL level in learning English, and the third consisting of open-ended questions to gather information on the specific SRL strategies employed by each student. The questionnaire scale is adapted from Wang & Bai's (2017) Questionnaire of English Self-Regulated Learning Strategies (QESRLS), comprising 25 items in 9 categories (Appendix 1). The QESRLS was primarily derived from the SRL theory developed by B. J Zimmerman & Pons (1986), which has been adjusted to suit the context of

English language learning better. Students respond to the items using a five-point scale based on their usage frequency, ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). The subsequent section of the questionnaire is open-ended, designed to gather insights into how students apply SRL strategies in the process of learning English (see Appendix 2). To check the questionnaire's validity, the researcher employed Pearson product-moment in SPSS 27 with a group of 23 students. To assess the questionnaire's reliability, Cronbach's alpha was utilized in SPSS version 27. The researcher employed a conventional method to classify the level of SRL. The potential scores from the questionnaire were categorized into three groups for each variable. The size of each group was established using the formula:

$$Class\ Width = \frac{Maximal\ Score - Minimum\ Score}{3}$$

In this study, the questionnaire comprised 25 valid questions, resulting in a scoring range of 25 to 125. Therefore, the interval width was calculated to be 33.33. Subsequently, the researcher adjusted the scores based on the classifications outlined in Table 1.

*Table 1. **The Classification of SRL Level***

Interval of SRL	Category
25 – 58.2	Low
58.3 – 91.5	Middle
91.6 – 125	High

To assess the students' English proficiency, the researcher conducted an English test using the EnglishScore mobile application by British Council. EnglishScore is a free English test that helps learners gauge their proficiency using the CEFR band. The test is designed with questions tailored to specific skills and CEFR levels, assessing core competencies such as grammar, vocabulary, reading, and listening. The automated scoring system quickly gives accurate results, aligning with CEFR and serving as an indicator of performance on other international English tests like IELTS (Anton, 2021). The research followed the scoring criteria outlined by the developers of the EnglishScore test to ascertain the English proficiency levels of students.

*Table 2. **The Category of Students' English Proficiency***

CEFR	EnglishScore	TOEFL ITP	IELTS
C2 (Proficient)			
	599	677	8
C1 (Advanced)			
	500	627	7
B2 (Upper Intermediate)			6
	400	543	5
B1 (Intermediate)			
	300	460	4
A2 (Elementary)			
	200	337	
A1 (Beginner)			
	100		
Pre A1 (Pre Beginner)			
	0		

(Source: English Score Application by British Council)

Statistical analysis is carried out using the SPSS version 27. Firstly, a test of normality was performed to determine whether the data are normally distributed or not. In this study, Shapiro Wilk is used by the researcher to do a normality test because the sample of data is less

than 50 (N < 50). Following that, a linearity test was conducted to determine the presence of a linear relationship between the dependent variable and independent variable. The subsequent step involves conducting simple regression analysis to comprehend whether the variables do indeed impact the other variables (Gallo, 2015). The result of the coefficient table (t-test) in SPSS indicates whether there is an influence of SRL on English proficiency. If the significance (Sig.) is less than 5%, then SRL has a significant influence; if the Sig. is more than 5%, then there is no significant influence of SRL on English proficiency.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The analysis yielded three key findings. Initially, the research delved into the participants' level in SRL, assessing their ability to direct their learning process, establish goals, and monitor their progress in mastering English. Subsequently, the researcher gauged students' English proficiency through the EnglishScore application developed by the British Council. Lastly, the study explored the potential relationship between students' SRL and their English proficiency levels. Using statistical analysis techniques, the researcher determined that SRL did not significantly contribute to the students' English proficiency. Responses from open-ended questionnaires regarding students' SRL practices in English learning were also examined to discern the strategies actually utilized by the students in their learning. Several factors emerged as potential contributors to the insignificant correlation between SRL and the students' English proficiency, including their language exposure and individual differences such as learning styles and backgrounds.

Self-Regulated Learning Level

The data collected from self-regulated learning scale questionnaire was thoroughly analyzed. Descriptive statistics were employed to reveal patterns and insights within the dataset, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of students' SRL. The resulting table displays descriptive statistics of self-regulated learning.

Table 3. ***Statistical Result of the SRL Questionnaire***

N	Valid	23
	Missing	0
Mean		86.83

Based on the results of the descriptive statistics, the average score for student self-regulated learning was found to be 86.83. When compared with the classification of SRL levels, it is evident that the SRL scores of high school students at this private school in Surabaya fall within the intermediate category. Therefore, it can be concluded that the level of self-regulated learning among students in learning English is moderate.

English Proficiency

From the outcomes of the English test administered via the English Score Application by the British Council, the researcher condensed the distribution frequency of English scores using SPSS 27 as follows:

Table 4. ***Statistical Results of the English Score***

N	Valid	23
	Missing	0
Mean		427.35

Based on the results of the descriptive statistics, the average English score for the students is 427.35. The median is 425, with a maximum score of 599 and a minimum score of 269. To gauge the students' English proficiency level, the researcher compared the mean score

with the classification table provided by the EnglishScore application from the British Council. It indicated that 427.35 falls into the 'upper intermediate' category. Therefore, based on this research, the average English proficiency level of students at a private school in Surabaya was determined to be upper intermediate.

The Contribution of Self-Regulated Learning on Students' English Proficiency

      The research sought to explore the influence of SRL on high school students' English proficiency at a private school in Surabaya. The researcher conducted inferential analysis with correlational research methods. Specifically, a one-way directional approach was taken, indicating that only variable "x" influences variable "y," not the other way around. Simple linear regression was used to address the research objective. Parametric statistics were chosen due to the normal distribution and linearity of the data. Thus, these data analysis methods were employed to investigate the impact of SRL on students' English proficiency.

*Table 5. **The Coefficient Result from SPSS Regression***

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	454.843	150.312		3.026	.006
	SRL	-.317	1.713	-.040	-.185	.855
a. Dependent Variable: English Score						

      Based on the significance value from the Coefficients table, a significance value of $0.855 > 0.05$ was obtained, indicating that the variable SRL (X) does not have a significant effect on the variable English score (Y).

Discussion

      To begin with, the SRL level among high school students at a private school in Surabaya reached an average score of 86.83 out of a total score of 125, indicating a moderate performance. Additionally, they demonstrated an upper intermediate proficiency in English, with an average score of 427.34 on the EnglishScore application by British Council. Remarkably, 9 out of 23 students who took the test achieved relatively high scores, placing them in the advanced category. However, the statistical analysis showed that there is no significant contribution of SRL on English scores. This finding is unexpected considering previous research indicating a significant impact of SRL on English proficiency (Bai & Wang, 2023; Cho & Kim, 2019; Guo et al., 2023; Schwam et al., 2021; Seker, 2016). Nevertheless, the researcher identified stronger factors potentially shaping the students' English competence based on responses from open-ended surveys conducted with students.

      One significant factor contributing to the high English proficiency of students is language exposure. Additionally, individual differences, including students' diverse learning styles and backgrounds, also influence the improvement of English proficiency. Many of the highest-scoring students do not actively engage in structured English learning activities. Instead, they predominantly consume English content such as movies, shows, and books out of habit and long-standing practice. They lack specific strategies to maintain motivation in learning English because they have a natural interest in the language. Moreover, they do not regularly monitor their progress, as they can intuitively sense their improvement. This explanation is consistent with the findings of previous research (Mamori et al., 2003), suggesting that high-performing students tend to employ what the researcher terms "strategies" naturally. These strategies are so ingrained in their behavior that they may not recognize them as distinct or deliberate actions.

Another significant factor is students' backgrounds, which affects the duration of their exposure to the English language. Some students have been exposed to English from an early age, both within their families and in their environment, leading them to unconsciously acquire the language. According to social cognitive theorists, the Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) process is influenced not only by students themselves but also by environmental factors (Bandura, 2001). Therefore, it is not surprising that although some students have a higher SRL level, it does not automatically make them proficient in English. Despite their frequency in setting goals, planning their studies, employing SRL strategies in learning, and tracking their progress, they might lack the extensive exposure to the English language compared to students who already have a high level of English proficiency due to their longer exposure to English.

An alternative explanation for the lack of significant impact of Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) in enhancing students' English proficiency in this study could be that less proficient students may have been motivated to frequently use SRL strategies, but ineffectively. This is evident in the lower levels of English proficiency achieved by students who were highly motivated and utilized SRL strategies. Conversely, relatively proficient students may have been more selective in applying strategies due to their extensive vocabulary. For example, Student A, who scored 544 with an advanced rating, when asked about his learning strategy in English, simply stated, "*I just regularly speak English, sometimes using broken English with friends and family.*" Similarly, Student B, who scored 579, mentioned, "*I rarely consume Indonesian content. I also enjoy playing video games in English because it's weirder and more interesting.*" In contrast, Student C, despite scoring much higher in SRL than the other two, only achieved a score of 310 in English. Interestingly, Student C employed more SRL strategies in learning, stating, "*I watch movies and YouTube with English subtitles, I watch English vocabulary and pronunciation reels on Instagram, I record new words, and I ask my teacher and classmates for help when I got difficulty.*" These findings align with research by J. Chen et al. (2023) regarding the weak correlation between SRL and English reading proficiency. Another study by Mamori et al., in 2003 also suggested that high motivation (the will to learn); either alone or in combination with strategy use, does not necessarily guarantee learning success. While a strong desire to learn may have prompted students to use strategies, these strategies did not always result in effective learning outcomes, possibly because these learners lacked the necessary metacognitive understanding to select and utilize strategies optimally (Mamori et al., 2003).

Ultimately, this study indicates that a weak correlation between self-regulated learning and English proficiency does not diminish its importance or applicability. Encouraging self-regulated learning in language education still holds practical benefits, as it has the potential to enhance English proficiency in conjunction with other factors. Particularly for students with limited language learning experience, developing self-regulation skills can foster essential language learning strategies both in and out of the classroom. A promising direction for future research would involve delving deeper into factors that predict students' English proficiency in similar contexts. Furthermore, additional research is warranted to clarify the unique contribution of self-regulated learning to English language acquisition.

CONCLUSION

This research examined the contribution of self-regulated learning among high schools students at a private school in Surabaya in shaping their English proficiency. The findings indicate that the students exhibited a moderate level of SRL, demonstrating their ability to take ownership of their learning quite well. Additionally, their English proficiency was found to be above average. The study findings suggest a surprising lack of significant correlation between Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) and English proficiency among the sampled students. Instead, the study highlights other influential factors such as language exposure and individual

differences in learning styles and backgrounds. Many high-scoring students do not actively engage in structured learning activities but rather immerse themselves in English naturally. Additionally, students' backgrounds play a crucial role. Those exposed to English from an early age tend to have higher proficiency levels. Furthermore, the study suggests that less proficient students may employ SRL strategies frequently but ineffectively, leading to lower proficiency levels. Conversely, more proficient students may be selective in their strategy application due to their extensive vocabulary. Despite the weak correlation between SRL and English proficiency in this study, encouraging SRL in language education remains valuable. It can complement other factors and contribute to enhanced proficiency, especially for students with limited language learning experience.

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