The Attitudes towards English Language Learning and Use of Self-Regulated Learning Strategies among College Non-English Majors

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Abstract- The present study was conducted to investigate the students' attitudes towards English language learning (ELL) and use of self-regulated learning (SRL) strategies at one college in Dak Lak, Vietnam. This study involved 241 non-English majors taking part in answering a questionnaire. The results showed that although the participants had positive attitudes towards ELL, they were likely to engage in SRL very low. Number of years of learning English did not account for the participants' change of attitudes to ELL. Academic achievements were also found to be significantly related to cognitive learning and environment management strategies. Additionally, academic achievements and attitudes towards ELL were positively correlated to SRL, yet only attitudes towards ELL were predictors of SRL.

Index Terms- Attitudes; English language learning; SRL strategies; Non-English majors

I. INTRODUCTION

The notion of self-regulated learning (SRL) has been widely paid attention (Zimmerman, 2001), and it has become one of the most interesting and attractive areas in educational psychology (Ng, 2010). Many researchers (e.g. Schunk, 2005b; Zimmerman, 2008; etc.) have identified that SRL is an important process that could help students to improve their performance and explain different achievement levels of students. In other words, SRL is closely related to academic achievement (Law et al., 2008; Pintrich, 2003). Self-regulating students, according to Zimmerman (2008), are those who actively employ a variety of learning behaviors or strategies to achieve self-set goals. They also rely on affective, cognitive, motivational, and behavior feedback to modify or adjust their behaviors and strategies when initially unable to attain their goals. In a similar aspect, SRL strategy usage can explain differences between good and poor learners (Kauffman, 2004; Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2005) as it is the foundation of academic achievement (Zimmerman, 2000). Research in the field of language education has indicated that "attitude to language is a construct that explains linguistic behavior in particular" (Mamun, et al., 2012, p. 200). Studies done by Baker (1992), Garder (1985), Hohenthal (2003), and Kara (2009) show that learners' attitudes, apart from opinions and beliefs, towards learning strongly affect their learning behaviors and consequently on their performance. Moreover, attitude is "a convenient and efficient way of explaining consistent patterns in behavior" (Mamun, et al., 2012, p. 201) as it often manages to summarize, explain, and predict behavior

(Baker, 1992). Accordingly, it may be assumed that attitudes towards learning may influence SRL as attitudes towards the subjects matter, as mentioned by Mealey (1990), may relate to SRL.

This study aimed at investigating the attitudes towards English language learning (ELL) and use of SRL strategies among non-English majors who were studying at one college in Dak Lak, Vietnam so as to understand whether there are any differences in SRL strategy usage and in terms of gender, years of learning English, and academic achievements or not, and whether ELL attitudes influence on SRL or not. In order to achieve the objectives above, two research questions were formed as follows:

1. Are there any differences in SRL strategy usage and ELL attitudes in terms of gender, years of learning English, and academic achievements?

2. Do attitudinal factors (perceived usefulness of English and English anxiety) influence on SRL?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies have revealed that SRL has become an important topic in educational research (e.g. Boekerts, Pintrich, & Zeidner, 2000; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001) as it is recognized as an important predictor of student academic achievement (Zumbrunn, Tadlock & Roberts, 2011). SRL has been variously defined by many researchers (e.g. Pintrich, 2000; Zimmerman, 1990; Zumbrunn, Tadlock & Roberts, 2011). Pintrich (2000) defines SRL as "an active, constructive process whereby learners set goals for their learning and then attempt to monitor, regulate, and control their cognition, motivation, and behavior, guided and constrained by their goals and the contextual features in the environment" (p. 453). According to Zumbrunn, Tadlock and Roberts (2011), SRL is "a process that assists students in managing their thoughts, behaviors, and emotions in order to successfully navigate their learning experiences." They argue that this process "occurs when a student's purposeful actions and processes are directed towards the acquisition of information or skills" (ibid.) and is separated into three distinct phases: forethought and planning, performance monitoring, and reflections on performance. They explain that during the forethought and planning phase, students analyze the learning task and set specific goals towards completing that task; in the performance monitoring phase, students employ strategies to make progress on the learning task and monitor the effectiveness of those strategies as well as their motivation for

continuing progress towards the goals of the task; and in the final reflection on performance phase, students evaluate their performance on the learning task with respect to the effectiveness of the strategies that they chose.

The use of strategy is the core of SRL, and different people from different age, regardless of their age, proficiency level and background education use different self-regulation strategies. A variety of SRL strategies have been identified by many researchers such as Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons (1986), Pintrich, Smith, Garcia, and McKeachie (1991); however, the ones given by Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons, 1986 are used as follows:

Table 1: SRL strategies (Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1986)

Categories of strategies	Definitions
1. Self-evaluation	Statements indicating student-initiated evaluations of the quality or progress of their work
2. Organizing and transforming	Statements indicating student-initiated overt or convert rearrangement
3. Goal-setting and planning	Statements indicating students setting of educational goals or subgoals and planning for sequencing, timing, and completing activities related to those goals
4. Seeking information	Statements indicating student-initiated efforts to secure further task information from nonsocial sources when undertaking an assignment
5. Keeping records and monitoring	Statements indicating student-initiated efforts to record events or results
6. Environmental structuring	Statements indicating student-initiated efforts to select or arrange the physical setting to make learning easier
7. Self-consequences	Students indicating student arrangement or imagination of rewards or punishment for success or failure
8. Rehearsing and memorizing	Statements indicating student-initiated efforts to memorize material by overt or covert practice
9-11. Seeking social assistance	Statements indicating student-initiated efforts to solicit help from peers (9), teachers (10), and adults (11)
12-14. Reviewing records	Statements indicating student-initiated efforts to read tests (12), notes (13), or textbooks (14)
15. Other	Statements indicating learning behavior that is initiated by other persons such as teachers or parents, and all unclear verbal responses

Many studies on language attitudes have revealed that there is a strong relationship between attitude and achievement (Hough & Piper, 1982; Simpson & Oliver, 1990; Visser, 2008). Researchers such as Fakeye (2010), Reid (2003), and Visser (2008) claim that attitude is a vital factor that influence language performance. In addition, Padwick (2010, as cited in Abidin, et. al, 2012) states that apart the intellectual perspective, the nature of language learning depends on the learners' motivation and attitude to learn the target language. For example, Mamun, et al. (2012) conducted a study to investigate attitudes of 79 undergraduate students of Life Science School of Khulna University towards English language. By employing a questionnaire to collect the data, they found that the respondents were positive towards English language and this could be attributed to the fact that respondents were instrumentally motivated towards English. Similarly, Gömleksiz (2010) investigated learners' attitudes towards language learning in association with gender, grade level, and department variables. He employed a questionnaire to collect data from 1275 students studying at Frat University, Turkey. The results showed that there were significant differences between the attitudes in terms of gender, grade level, and department variables. Specifically, he found that female students had more positive attitudes in interest, usefulness and teacher subscales; sophomores' attitudes were more positive than freshmen in terms of interest, self-confidence, usefulness, and teacher subscales; students' attitudes vary from one department to another. In 2011, Ghazvini and Khajehpour carried out an investigation on Iranian students' attitudes and motivations towards learning English. There were 123 male and female students from two high schools participating in answering a questionnaire. The results showed that female students were more positively motivated and male students were more instrumentally motivated to learning English. Moreover, they also found that female students had more positive attitudes towards learning English.

From the brief literature review above, it is apparent that there is strong relationship between SRL and academic achievement (Bembenutty & Zimmerman, 2003). Accordingly, learners who are able to self-regulate may gain more academic success. In another aspect, studies have showed that a strong connection between attitudes and academic success may exist as "attitudes are important… because they cannot be nearly separated from study" Reid (2003, p. 33).

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Participants

Participants in this study, who were conveniently sampled, were 241 non-English majors (aged from 19 to 23) studying at one college in Dak Lak, Vietnam. They were mainly second-year students consisting of 133 females (55.2 %) and 108 males (44.8%). There were 201 (83.4%) participants having learned English over seven years, and 40 (16.6%) participants having learned English from three to seven years. Their last self-reported academic achievements were grade A (23.7%), grade B (51.4%), grade C (18.7%), and grade D (6.2%). The participants had to study English in four terms in total, three of which were General English, and one of which was English for specific purposes.

3.2. Instrument:

This study employed a questionnaire to collect data. The questionnaire was adapted from the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) developed by Paul Pintrich, David Smith, William McKeachie, Teresa Garcia, and a team of researchers (Pintrich et al., 1991) and Cindy Otts (2011). The questionnaire consists of two parts: Part I includes eight five-point Likert scale items (strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree) about English attitudes (English usefulness and anxiety); part II comprises 36 seven-point Likert scale items (from very untrue of me to very true of me) about different SRL strategies (Rehearsal, Elaboration, Organization, Metacognitive, Environment, Effort, Peer learning, and Help seeking strategies) for ELL.

Table 2: SRL categories and number of items per category

	No of items
1. Perceived usefulness of English	4
2. English anxiety	4
3. Rehearsal	3
4. Elaboration	3
5. Organization	3
6. Metacognitive self-regulation	8
7. Environmental management	8
8. Effort regulation	4
9. Peer learning	3
10. Help seeking	3
Total	**44**

3.3. Data analysis

The collected data were analyzed by the SPSS version 15.0 program aiming to answer the research questions quantitatively. Descriptive statistics were run to calculate mean scores and standard deviations for gender, academic achievements, English language attitudes, and SRL. In addition, inferential statistics including independent samples T-test, correlation analysis, and one-way ANOVA were used. The independent samples T-test, correlation analysis, and one-way ANOVA were employed to analyze the differences in English language attitudes and SRL in terms of gender, years of learning English, and academic achievements. To determine the influence of English language attitudes on SRL, multiple regression analyses were conducted.

IV. FINDINGS

4.1 Differences in ELL attitudes and SRL in terms of gender, number of years of learning English, and academic achievements
The results of descriptive analysis in the table 3 show that the overall mean score of ELL attitudes among the participants was 2.61 (SD=.54) on a Likert scale of one to five, and that of overall SRL strategy usage was 4.07 (SD=.59) on a Likert scale of one to seven. It was also seen that organization strategies (M=4.53, SD=1.20) were most employed while peer learning strategies (M=3.68, SD=1.16) were least used.

Table 3: Descriptive analysis: Overall score of ELL attitudes and SRL strategy usage

	Mean (SD)
Perceived usefulness of English	2.11 (.74)
English anxiety	3.11 (.73)
Overall	**2.61 (.54)**
Organization	4.53 (1.20)
Help seeking	4.32 (1.20)
Rehearsal	4.29 (1.08)
Elaboration	4.15 (1.19)
Environmental management	4.04 (.68)
Effort regulation	4.04 (.86)
Peer learning	3.68 (1.16)
Overall	**4.07 (.59)**

As far as the gender is concerned, the results from independent samples t-tests in the table 4 display that there were no significant gender differences in ELL attitudes and SRL strategy usage. It was seen that the mean scores of perceived usefulness of English and English anxiety of both groups were quite close. The mean score of perceived usefulness of English was 2.19 (SD=.72) for females and 2.02 (SD=.76) for males, and that of English anxiety was 3.14 (SD=.74) for females and 3.06 (SD=.70) for males Among categories of SRL strategies, both groups most used the organization strategies (M=4.63, SD=1.21 for females; M=4.43, SD=1.19 for males), and least utilized the peer learning strategies (M=3.74, SD=1.20 for females; M=3.60, SD=1.12 for males).

Table 4: Independent samples T-test: Differences in ELL attitudes and SRL strategy usage in terms of gender

Variables	Sig.	t	Mean (SD) Female	Male
Perceived usefulness of English	.070	1.817	2.19 (.72)	2.02 (.76)
English anxiety	.405	.834	3.14 (.74)	3.06 (.70)
Rehearsal	.179	1.347	4.37 (1.08)	4.19 (1.08)
Elaboration	.092	-1.693	4.03 (1.11)	4.29 (1.27)
Organization	.163	1.433	4.63 (1.21)	4.43 (1.19)
Metacognitive self-regulation	.251	-1.150	3.93 (.67)	4.04 (.80)
Environmental management	.381	-.877	4.00 (.68)	4.08 (.67)
Effort regulation	.235	-1.191	3.98 (.87)	4.11 (.67)
Peer learning	.383	.874	3.74 (1.20)	3.60 (1.12)

| Help seeking | .197 | -1.295 | 4.23 (1.19) | 4.41 (1.20) |

* p<.05
** p<.01

With respect to the number of years of learning English, the results from correlation analyses in table 5 reveal that the number of years of learning English was not significant related to ELL attitudes and SRL strategy usage except for rehearsal strategies.

It was found that there was a negative correlation between the number of years of learning English and rehearsal strategy usage (r=-.160, p=.031).

Table 5: Correlation Matrix: Differences in ELL attitudes and SRL strategy usage in terms of number of years of learning English

Variable	Correlation statistics	Number of years of learning English
Perceived usefulness of English	Pearson Correlation	-.007
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.919
	N	241
English anxiety	Pearson Correlation	.81
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.213
	N	241
Rehearsal	Pearson Correlation	-.160
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**.013***
	N	241
Elaboration	Pearson Correlation	-.022
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.733
	N	241
Organization	Pearson Correlation	.009
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.884
	N	241
Metacognitive self-regulation	Pearson Correlation	.014
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.828
	N	241
Environmental management	Pearson Correlation	-.043
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.511
	N	241
Effort regulation	Pearson Correlation	-.028
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.668
	N	241
Peer learning	Pearson Correlation	-.002
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.974
	N	241
Help seeking	Pearson Correlation	-.083
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.197
	N	241

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)
** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

As for the academic achievements, the results from one-way ANOVA presented in table 6 show that there were significant differences between academic achievements with English anxiety (F=3.020, p=.031), organization (F=4.118, p=.007), and environmental management strategy (F=2.740, p=.044) usage.

Table 6: ANOVA: Differences in ELL attitudes and SRL strategy usage in terms of academic achievements

Variables	F	Sig.	Mean (SD)			
			Grade A	Grade B	Grade C	Grade D
Perceived usefulness of English	.852	.467	2.25 (.87)	2.07 (.73)	2.09 (.64)	2.05 (.58)
English anxiety	**3.020**	**.031***	**3.00 (.78)**	**3.04 (.73)**	**3.34 (.64)**	**3.35 (.56)**
Rehearsal	1.998	.115	4.46 (1.21)	4.35 (1.01)	4.02 (1.09)	3.96 (.98)
Elaboration	1.226	.301	4.22 (1.33)	4.24 (1.15)	3.89 (1.25)	3.91 (.68)
Organization	**4.118**	**.007****	**4.69 (1.31)**	**4.66 (1.13)**	**4.27 (1.26)**	**3.69 (.82)**
Metacognitive self-regulation	.824	.482	4.07 (.78)	3.99 (.71)	3.88 (.70)	3.83 (.86)
Environmental management	**2.740**	**.044***	**3.94 (.66)**	**4.15 (.67)**	**3.85 (.73)**	**4.05 (.51)**
Effort regulation	.152	.928	4.01 (.76)	4.03 (.86)	4.12 (1.00)	4.02 (.83)
Peer learning	1.396	.245	3.87 (1.27)	3.69 (1.18)	3.40 (1.13)	3.64 (1.21)
Help seeking	.207	.892	4.411 (.29)	4.31 (1.14)	4.22 (1.17)	4.33 (1.50)

* p<.05
** p<.01

Results from Tukey post hoc tests with significance at the .05 level reveal that the participants in grade C (M=3.34, SD=.64) experienced anxiety in learning English significantly differently from those in grade A (M=3.00, SD=.78) and B (M=3.04, SD=.73) with p=.048 and p=.040, respectively; the participants in grade D (M=3.69, SD=.82) used organization strategies significantly differently from those in grades A (M=4.69, SD=1.30) and B (M=4.66, SD=1.13) with p=.020 and p=.016, respectively; the participants in grade B (M=4.15, SD=.67) employed environmental management strategies significantly differently from those in grade C (M=3.85, SD=.73) with p=. 050.

4.2. Influence of ELL attitudes on SRL

Before multiple regression analysis was carried to find out whether attitudes towards ELL related to SRL, correlation analyses were done first. As presented in table 7, results indicated that SRL was positively correlated with academic achievements (r=.117, p=.034) and, ELL attitudes (r=.250, and r=.305, p=.000 for perceived usefulness of English and English anxiety, respectively).

Table 7: Correlation Matrix: SRL with gender, years of learning English, academic achievements, and ELL attitudes

Variable	Correlation statistics	SRL
Gender	Pearson Correlation	.049
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.223
	N	241
Years of learning English	Pearson Correlation	-.053
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.206
	N	241
academic achievements	Pearson Correlation	.117
	Sig. (1-tailed)	**.034**
	N	241
Perceived usefulness of English	Pearson Correlation	.250
	Sig. (1-tailed)	**.000****
	N	241
English anxiety	Pearson Correlation	.305
	Sig. (1-tailed)	**.000****
	N	241

* p<.05
** p<.01

As displayed in tables 8, 9 and 10 for the Model Summary, ANOVA, and predictors results, respectively, it was found in table 8 that the R came out to be .387 and R square .150. In this case, the R values was .0387, which means that gender, years of English learning, academic achievements, ELL attitudes explained a rather large portion, 38.7% of the variance in the SRL. As presented in table 9, the overall model was statistically significant (F=8.289, p=.000). Attitudes towards ELL were significantly predictors except for gender, years of learning English, and academic achievements. This means that perceived usefulness of English and English anxiety were uniquely predictors of SRL strategy usage.

Table 8: Model Summary for Multiple Regression Analysis: Influence of ELL attitudes on SRL

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.387[a]	.150	.132	.555

a. Predictors: (Constant), Gender, Years of English learning, academic achievements, Perceived usefulness of English, English anxiety

Table 9: Influence of ELL attitudes on SRL

Model		df	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5	8.289	.000
	Residual	235		
	Total	240		

a. Predictors: (Constant), Gender, Years of English learning, academic achievements, Perceived usefulness of English, English anxiety
b. Dependent Variable: Self-regulated learning

Tables 10: Multiple Regression Analysis: Gender, Years of English learning, academic achievements, and attitudinal predictors of SRL

Model	Predictor	Standardized Coefficients β	t	Sig.[a]
1	(Constant)		16.213	.000
	Gender	.008	.132	.895
	Years of learning English	-.032	-.523	.601
	academic achievements	-.090	-1.464	.144
	Perceived usefulness of English	**-.229**	**-3.746**	**.000**
	English anxiety	**-.263**	**-4.256**	**.000**

a. Dependent Variable: Self-regulated learning

V. DISCUSSION

It was generally found that although the participants had positive attitudes towards ELL (M=2.61), it seems that they did not actively engage in the learning process as the mean score of overall SRL strategy usage is 4.07 on a Likert scale of one to seven, which indicates that they might not be well aware of the importance of using SRL strategies. In addition, although SRL consists of eight categories including rehearsal, elaboration, organization, metacognitive, environment, effort, peer learning, and help seeking strategies, the participants most employed organization strategies (M=4.53) and least utilized peer learning strategies (M=3.68) among SRL strategies. This means that the participants were somewhat likely to benefit from using cognitive learning strategies (organization strategies), but they were not likely to work in pairs or groups. This suggests that the participants were quite weak at pairwork or groupwork.
Regarding the differences in ELL attitudes and SRL in terms of gender, number of years of learning English, and academic achievements, it was first found that there was no significant gender difference in ELL attitudes. This finding is quite different with that of previous researches done by Ghazvini and Khajehpour (2011), Gömleksiz (2010), and Krahan (2007), who find that students' attitudes towards English language learning differ significantly in terms of gender. As the mean score of perceived usefulness of English is 2.19 for females and 2.02 for males, and that of English anxiety is 3.14 for females and 3.06 for males, it is understood that both groups perceived English as, to some extent, useful and relevant to their lives, and were somewhat anxious about learning English. In addition, it was also found that nor was there significant gender difference in SRL strategy usage, but both groups were noticed to most use the organization strategies (M=4.63 for females; M=4.43 for males), and least utilize the peer learning strategies (M=3.74 for females; M=3.60 for males). This finding also confirmed what was found in the overall SRL strategy usage.

Second, it was discovered that no matter how long the participants studied English, their attitudes towards ELL did not change as the number of years of learning English was not significant related to ELL attitudes. As for SRL strategies, there were eight categories, there was only one negative correlation between the number of years of learning English and rehearsal

strategy usage. This suggests that the more years the participants studied English, the less they employed rehearsal strategies in learning English.

Third, the results from one-way ANOVA revealed that significant differences existed between academic achievements with English anxiety, organization, and environmental management strategy usage. Accordingly, results from Tukey post hoc tests indicated that the participants in grade C (M=3.34) experienced anxiety in learning English significantly differently from those in grade A (M=3.00) and B (M=3.04), which might imply that the higher achievements the participants obtained, the lower anxiety they experienced. This finding appears to be consistent with the findings of a number of previous studies that "students with higher level of anxiety tend to do more poorly in their language classes" (Horwitz, 2008, p.9). Moreover, the results also showed that the participants in grade D (M=3.69) used organization strategies significantly differently from those in grades A (M=4.69) and B (M=4.66), and the participants in grade B (M=4.15) employed environmental management strategies significantly differently from those in grade C (M=3.85). This means that the higher grades the participants obtained, the more organization and environmental management strategies they employed in the learning process. These findings are supported by many researchers such as Law et al. (2008), Schunk (2005b), Pintrich (2003), and Zimmerman (2008), who claim that SRL is an important process that could help students to improve their performance and explain different achievement levels of students.

In respect of the influence of ELL attitudes on SRL, although the findings from correlation analyses displayed that SRL was positively correlated with academic achievements and ELL attitudes, those from multiple regression analysis revealed that only ELL attitudes were significantly related to SRL. ELL attitudes contributed significantly to SRL, and were uniquely predictors of SLR. This finding, which indicates that attitudes towards ELL were an important component of SRL among the participants, is consistent with that of a number of previous studies done by Baker (1992), Garder (1985), Hohenthal (2003), and Kara (2009), who state that learners' attitudes towards learning strongly affect their learning behaviors.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study presented that although the participants (both females and males) perceived English as fairly useful to their lives and felt somewhat anxious about learning English, they were likely to engage in SLR very low. The participants were generally found to use SRL strategies at a low rate, and tend to most employ cognitive learning strategies among SRL categories in their learning process. Additionally, the participants had constant attitudes to ELL regardless of number of years of learning English. Findings also indicated that those who earned higher grades experienced lower anxiety and used more SRL strategies in their ELL. Academic achievements and attitudes towards ELL (perceived usefulness of English and English anxiety) were positively correlated to SRL, yet perceived usefulness of English and English anxiety were significantly predictors to SRL.

Based on the findings, some recommendations should be made. In the context of English as a compulsory subject, although the participants perceived English as somewhat useful and relevant to their lives, they still experienced anxiety in the learning process. It is hence recommended to create an encouraging atmosphere in English classes to reduce students' anxiety in English learning process. This can be done by implementing appropriate teaching methods and activities. Furthermore, attitudes to ELL were found significantly predictive to SRL, so it is strongly recommended to promote students' positive attitudes and motivation towards ELL as well as highlight the importance of ELL. With respect to SRL strategy usage, students should be fostered the awareness of the importance of using SRL strategies so as to help them become independent learners. Therefore, it is recommended that SRL strategies should be integrated in language instruction so that students know how to apply them in the learning context.

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