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Telling ELT Tales out of School

Self-regulated learning: How is it applied as a part of teacher training through diary studies?

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Abstract

Self-regulation, as a form of self-instruction and improvement, attributes very active roles to learners. This study aims to identify trainee teachers' self-regulated learning strategies and to find out how they use them as a part of their teaching practice. Data collection instruments include the use of self-regulation questionnaire and trainee teachers' diaries.

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Key words: Self-regulated learning; diary study; teacher training



1. Introduction

One of the basic aims of education is to be able to train individuals who take the responsibility of their own learning, who direct their learning process and take part in it at the same time. These individuals are also aware of their personal abilities and they know how to use them positively. Self-regulation refers to “the individual’s ability to control the learning process without being dependent on the other people or his/her environment” (Israel, 2007: 3). It is also defined as “the capacity to plan, guide and monitor one’s behaviour flexibly in the face of changing circumstances” (Brown, 1998:162).

Zimmerman and Schunk (1997) define it as using the processes activating and sustaining thoughts, behaviours and feelings so as to reach one’s goals. This definition clearly indicates the fact that self-regulation is goal-directed and active and it results from self-control of behaviour motivation and cognition as suggested by Brooks (1997).

As can be understood from all these definitions, self-regulation includes not only affective but also cognitive components. To illustrate, individuals with self-regulation have specific aims, a desire to learn (affect), have several knowledge of strategies (cognition), have information about how to use these strategies (cognition), and believe that



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they can achieve with the help of the implementation of a self-regulatory response (Zimmerman, 1989). McMahon and Luca (2001) indicate this combination in the following way:

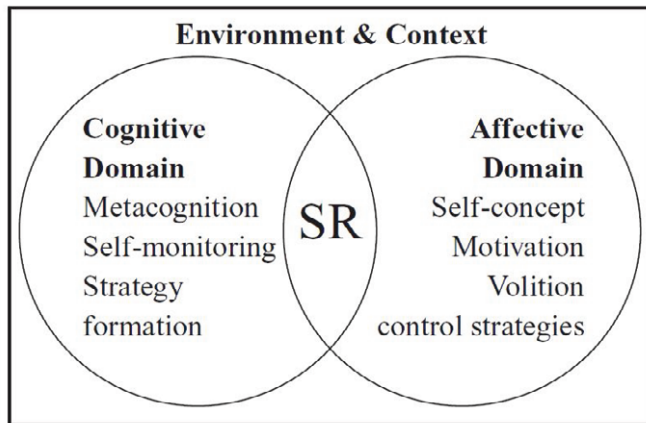


Figure 1. Affective and cognitive domain in self-regulated learning (McMahon & Luca, 2001)

According to Figure 1, self-regulation is interrelated with both affective and the cognitive domain equally; therefore, it is associated with some other terms such as metacognition, self-monitoring, strategy formation, self-concept, motivation, and volition control strategies.

Zimmerman (1986) also points out that if the students are metacognitively, motivationally and behaviourally proactive participants in their own learning process, then it is possible to call them “self-regulated learners”. Throughout their learning process, they assess whether the strategies that they adopt are helpful in order to reach pre-determined goals or not, check their understanding of the topic they are dealing with, and make necessary changes accordingly. Such kind of adjustments made by learners based on repeated monitoring and comparison to the standards has a positive effect on the decision-making process related to when, what and how to regulate (Azavedo, 2009:88). With the help of this process, subsequent learning sessions are directly affected. In other words, they become “masters of their own learning process” (Zimmerman & Schunk, 1998).

Carver and Scheier (1982), who considered self-regulation as the feedback loop, stated that self-regulation requires three components:

- a. Ideas and goals for behavior (standards)
- b. Comparing current self to standards (monitoring)
- c. Changing the current state if it falls short of standards (operate)

In their view, for a behavior to occur, there are some specific requirements set by the individuals. Then, they compare these with the standard behaviours and finally, if they are not appropriate for standards, they have a tendency to change it.

Miller, Brown and Lawendowski (1999) elaborated the theory of Carver and Scheier (1982) and expanded the number of processes. According to their classification, there are 7 basic processes involved:

- Information input
- Self evaluation
- Instigation to change triggered behavior by perceptions of discrepancy
- Search for ways to reduce discrepancy
- Planning for change
- Implementation of behavior change
- Evaluation of progress towards a goal

These processes were indicated as receiving, evaluating, triggering, searching, formulating, implementing and assessing by them. It is argued that problems in any of these processes might lead to disorders of self-regulation.

II. Methodology

The aim of this study is to identify the trainee teachers’ self-regulated learning strategies and to find out how they use them as a part of their teaching practice. Therefore, the participants’ averages related to the seven processes

stated above were calculated initially. Later on, their comments that they have written in their diaries were taken into consideration and finally, whether there was a correspondence between these two sources was analyzed.

III. Instruments

In accordance with the previous processes, Brown, Miller and Lawendowski (1999) developed a questionnaire. In this questionnaire, every process was indicated with some specific steps. **Receiving** (relevant information), **evaluating** (the relevant information and comparing it to norms), **triggering** (change), **searching** (for options), **formulating** (a plan), **implementing** (the plan), **assessing** (the plan's effectiveness) are the basic parts in the questionnaires. Data collection instruments include Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ) (Brown, Miller & Lawendowski, 1999) and trainee teachers' diaries that they have kept on a weekly basis depending on their teaching practice in their practice high school. The basic purpose of SRQ is to assess the self-regulatory processes of teacher trainees through self-report. Internal consistency of the scale used was quite high ($\alpha = .91$) Likewise, their diaries clearly state what they think about their teaching practice.

IV. Participants

The participants of this study are 10 trainee teachers from Kocaeli University, Faculty of Education ELT Department in the spring term of 2009-2010 academic year. They have carried out their teaching practice with the 9th grade students in Gazi Lisesi, Kocaeli, Turkey.

V. Findings

As the first step of analysis, the students' answers that they gave to the items in the questionnaire were taken into account. The following table (Table 1) indicates the averages of students taking part in this study.

Table 1. Students' averages for each step of the behaviour

	Receiving	Evaluating	Triggering	Searching	Formulating	Implementing	Assessing
1	3.4	3.0	3.5	3.8	3.4	3.1	3.7
2	3.3	3.0	3.8	3.4	3.2	3.3	3.4
3	3.8	2.5	3.5	3.2	3.5	3.1	3.2
4	3.5	3.3	3.7	3.9	3.7	3.4	3.8
5	3.5	3.0	3.4	3.5	3.3	3.0	3.4
6	3.7	3.2	4.1	4.5	3.2	3.8	3.7
7	3.6	2.8	3.7	4.0	3.6	3.5	3.9
8	3.7	3.1	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.5	3.3
9	3.5	3.2	3.4	3.7	3.3	3.1	3.4
10	4.0	3.3	3.5	3.8	3.1	3.3	3.6
Av	3.6	3.0	3.6	3.7	3.4	3.3	3.5

As can be understood from this table, the students' averages for each step are quite close to each other. When their answers that they have given to the questionnaire are taken into consideration, the highest average belongs to the process of "searching". On the other hand, the lowest average belongs to the process of "evaluating". Even though the research results indicate the highest and lowest average in this way, their thoughts which are written in their diaries about their own teaching practice generally do not correlate with their questionnaire results when their answers are matched.

While the analysis was being made, the last two steps of the procedure were not taken into account on account of the fact that their time for teaching practice was very limited and they did not have the chance of repeating it with the same students.

In the second part of the analysis, their written comments in their diaries about their teaching practice were dwelled upon. There are very specific sentences indicating different processes stated by Brown, Miller and Lawendowski (1999).

Table 2. Student comments based on the process of “receiving”

Student 1	I chose a text about jeans this week so as to make a difference.
Student 2	My grammar topic was Present Perfect Tense. I wanted the topic to be understood before doing an activity.
Student 3	This week I thought about what I was going to do with The Present Perfect Tense because I didn't want to use The Grammar-Translation Method.

Student comments based on the process of “evaluating”:

Student 4	First of all, my time was enough for all the activities that I prepared. I think I was good at classroom management and I used my voice well.
Student 5	Starting the lesson late was unlucky for me.
Student 6	I finished everything I had planned on time.

Student comments based on the process of “triggering”:

Student 7	I might have missed some important points in the lesson
Student 8	I couldn't use the time well and it was not enough for half of my activities. This lesson may not have been very effective for the students.

Student comments based on “searching”:

Student 7	I should have included easier verbs in my activity.
Student 2	It would have been better if I had explained the topic with pictures at the beginning of the lesson.
Student 4	I should have included an easier reading passage for the practice of the main topic.

One of the most interesting findings of this research is that “evaluating” process is the one which has the lowest average in the questionnaire; however, it is one of the most common processes adopted by the students. Another finding indicates that “receiving” is a very important step in their self-regulation process; therefore, its average is 3.6.

Moreover, Student 4 and Student 7, whose averages are the highest in Figure 1, have got parallel comments on their teaching practice in their diaries.

VI. Suggestions

It is a good idea to increase the number of students taking part in the study so as to obtain more data. For future studies, it is better to ask them to write more detailed comments on their own practice because it would be easier to observe all the processes taking part in the questionnaire. As the students' practice teaching time was limited, the last three processes were not observed and analyzed in this context. If their teaching time were lengthened, more fruitful results could be obtained.

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