Self-Regulation and Language Learning: Exploring the Impact of Self-regulated Learning Strategies in Behavioural Variable for Learning English as a Second Language

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Abstract

The focus of the current study was to examine the effectiveness of self-regulated learning strategies in behavioural variable when learning English as a second language. Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive theory was used to explain how the personal, behavioural and environmental factors impact human functioning. Yet, in the current research study, the focus was given only to the behavioural component of self-regulation, and for the research design, the qualitative case study approach was used. As for the participants, five purposely selected undergraduates were chosen from one of the public universities in Sri Lanka. Data were collected through field notes and interviews, and the collected data were analyzed using qualitative data analysis. The findings indicate that the learners varied in their self-regulatory competence and strategies in behavioural variable. Moreover, the findings and conclusions have significant implications in self-regulation study, social cognitive theory and English as second language classroom teaching. The results of the study also highlight the importance of social support. It is proposed to conduct more exploratory qualitative studies in various contexts for further avenues.

1. Introduction

Self-regulation is pivotal as the main focus in education is to enhance life-long learning skills among students. More than detailed knowledge of a skill, self-regulated learning includes self-awareness, self-motivation and behavioural skill to implement knowledge appropriately. These learners are always aware of their strengths and limitations as personal goals and task-related strategies guide them. As they constantly monitor their progress, it encourages them to enhance self-satisfaction and motivation to improve their learning methods. Due to self-regulated learning, the learners will succeed academically while seeing their future opportunities very positively (Zimmerman, 2002).

As it is stated, "self-regulation is not a mental ability or an academic performance skill, but rather the self-defective process by which learners transform their mental abilities into academic skills" (Zimmerman,

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2002.p.65). As Pintrich (1999) points out, self-regulation learning is a set of strategies that learners use to monitor their cognition. Developing self-regulated learning is essential at a young age, mainly because it supports reducing stress and frustration visible among university students. Simultaneously, the physical, mental and educational changes experienced by this age group highlight the importance of guiding them to use self-regulated learning strategies (Wigfield & Eccless,2002). Yet, very often, when lessons and exercises are complex and continue for a more extended period, learners experience difficulties, stressors or distractors which discourage them from using self-regulatory skills (Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994).

As self-regulation learning supports examining the second language learning process more comprehensively, it has attracted the researchers' attention on second language acquisition. Those who master self-regulatory learning strategies can set learning goals, use effective learning strategies, and increase learner motivation, leading them to perform better academically (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011).

Self-regulated learners should have their own learning goals, and they should take responsibility for their learning while controlling individual thoughts, behaviour and environment. As Zimmerman (1989) points out, a self-regulated learning strategy improves personal, behavioural and environmental elements. Though the reviewed findings indicate the positive impact of self-regulated learning strategies on academic learning, studies investigating the relationship between self-regulated learning and second language proficiency are scant. Moreover, ESL learners who struggle to improve English proficiency might not have proper understanding and guidance on using necessary self-regulatory learning strategies to reach the expected interdependence and learner autonomy in language learning. Besides, self-regulated learning strategies may vary depending on personal, behavioural and environmental factors that need to be more explicitly delineated. Therefore, in the current study, attention has been paid to investigating the influence of self-regulated learning strategies on behavioural factors for ESL learners' language learning process.

1.1. Literature review
1.1.1. Self-regulated Learning

Self-regulated learning means the capability to understand and control the learning environment of individuals. Self-regulation consists of goal-setting, self-monitoring, self-instruction and self-reinforcement. In this process, individuals change their mental abilities into skills and behaviour through a developmental process that develops through directed practice and feedback (Shunk, 1996, Paris & Paris, 2001). According to Zimmerman and Schunk (2001), individuals who use self-regulated learning strategies often regulate individual thinking and motivational beliefs while managing the resources and the learning environment. Self-regulated learners do not constantly depend on or seek assistance from teachers due to individual willpower and learning skills. These learners are aware of the cognitive strategies which support them to balance and gain their academic goals. As defined by Pintrich (2000) Self-regulated learning is "...........an active, constructive process whereby learners set goals for their learning and then attempt to

monitor and control their cognition, motivation and behaviour, guided and constrained by their goals and their contextual features in the environment" (p.453).

According to Pintrich (1995), self-regulated learning consists of "active, goal-directed, self-control of behaviour, motivation, and cognition for academic tasks by an individual student" (p.6). Self-regulated learners' age, gender, ethnicity, ability level, prior knowledge, or motivation do not impact the learners. Students should be responsible for their learning, and they should understand that they have the possibility of controlling their education. Teachers can also support students to become self-regulated learners, and teachers can provide needed feedback to their students to identify where they had gone wrong. As Hamer (2004) illustrates, the teacher is a motivator who provides a source of information, suggestions and guidance. More than teacher-centred learning in today's world, student-centred learning is encouraged in classrooms. Teachers' role can be best interpreted as facilitators who offer more space for choices of their learners in a learner-centred context (Mercer & Nordby, 2002). As Shankr (2010) posits, there will be more opportunities for self-regulated learning strategies in such a learning context.

According to Bandura (1986), to be self-regulated, individuals need to use self-observation, self-judgement and self-reaction, which support individuals monitoring and regulating their behaviour accordingly. Besides, since these three processes are not mutually exclusive, they interact with each other. Self-observation leads to self-evaluation, which leads to personal and behavioural self-reactions (Schunk, 2009). In self-observation, one is deliberately observing their behaviour. Self-observation can increase motivation when one realizes the individual act, which often causes to react and alter the behaviour. Just as self-observation is vital for self-regulation, an observation evaluation also plays an important role. Zimmerman (1989) highlights that self-judgement compares individual performance with a standard or goal. The main components of the self-judgment process are personal standards, valuation of the activity and attributions. Private standards are often based on social comparisons, while the valuation of the activity is when people value the importance of activities. Attributions occur when people accept that success or failure occurs due to ability or effort.

Self-reaction is an evaluation of self-judgment. Hence, individuals judge based on their progress by following personal observations toward self-set goals and changing their behaviour to reach these goals. After revising the personal standards and giving rewards, the individuals are encouraged for performing (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2004).

It also stated that self-regulated learning is a metacognitive process that encourages learners to improve their thinking to understand and assess the results of their actions and plan novel pathways to success (Pajares, 2008). As per the social cognitive theory, Schunk (2001) defined that self-regulated learning is generated from students' thoughts and behaviours to gain their learning goals. Pintrich (1995) states that initially, self-regulated learners control their behaviour, motivation, affect and cognition, and then try to accomplish their goals. Finally, as individuals, they try to control their

actions. By controlling their behaviour and environment, the self-regulated learners seek to achieve their goals.

1.2.   Self-Regulated Learning in Second Language Learning

A great number of researchers have found that students can develop metacognitive strategies and use these self-regulated strategies to improve their language learning (Lee, 2002, Mohd Kosnin, 2007, Mourd, 2009, Throndsen, 2011). As Dornyei and Skehan (2003) point out, when investigating language learners' self-regulation, the emphasis has been shifted from the product to the process of language learning. Moreover, it has been noted that the focus on language learning and teaching has been moved from language teachers to language learners in recent years.

For second language learners, self-regulated language learning is the process the learners enhance to develop their language learning skills to achieve language learning goals. Dornyei (2005) defines self-regulation in second language learning as "the degree to which are active participants in their learning" (p.191). A study was conducted by Mourd (2009) to investigate the effectiveness of self-regulated learning strategies in improving the writing skills of ESL learners in one of the secondary schools in Kafr El-Sheik. The study results revealed that the self-regulated language learning strategies effectively improved the writing skills among the participants. In Mohd Kosnin (2007) study, it was investigated that the relationship between self-regulated learning and academic achievement among 460 second-year Engineering students in one of the public universities in Malaysia. The results revealed that those who score more marks use more self-regulated learning strategies than low achievers.

Moreover, it was found out that metacognitive skills play a significant role in individual's academic performance, and it supports the learners to plan, observe and assess their performance. Lee (2002) conducted a qualitative study to investigate the effectiveness of self-regulated learning strategies among ESL learners for essay writing. The study revealed that self-evaluation, organizing and transforming, seeking information and seeking social assistance supported the participants to improve their essay writing skills.

In Tsuda and Nakata's (2012) study, the factors involved in self-regulated language learning among Japanese Senior high school students were explored. A 45-item questionnaire was distributed among 1076 students. The findings indicate the complex internal factors affecting Japanese students' learning. The findings highlight that teachers in Japan should encourage the learners to be autonomous through understanding the internal factors. By examining some Turkish students who use self-regulated learning strategies in English, Inan (2013) also concluded that learners who use more self-regulated learning strategies could earn higher GPAs than those who did not use self-regulated learning strategies in learning English.

1.3.   Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive theory explains how the personal, behavioural and environmental factors impact human functioning. These three sub-functions interact through a process, which Bandura (1986)

termed as reciprocal interaction in which each sub-function affects the other two. Further, Bandura states that

> In the social cognitive view, people are neither driven by inner forces nor automatically shaped and controlled by external stimuli. Instead, human functioning is explained in terms of a model of triadic reciprocality in which behaviour, cognitive and other personal factors and environmental events all operate as interacting determinants of each other (Bandura, 1986, p.18)

The Figure 1 illustrates the components of self-regulation. The three processes of the behavioural component are self-judgment, self-observation and self-reaction. Students' motivational beliefs are the factors in the individual component, and peers, teachers, and classroom social environment are the environmental component of self-regulation.
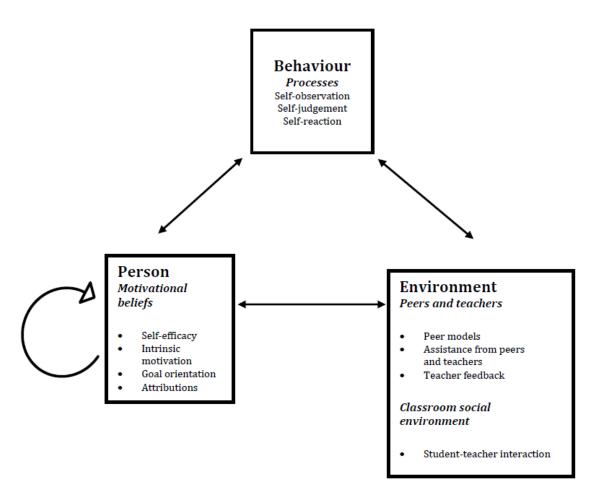

Figure 1. Components of self-regulation (Source: Zimmerman (1998, p.83))

As Zimmerman (1989) posits, when individuals can control personal, behavioural and environmental factors – they are self-regulating. Monitoring occurs when learners monitor individual learning by evaluating their achievement based on their set goals and changing their behaviour and learning strategies.

Self-regulation is a cyclical process that changes according to personal, behavioural and environmental factors. The changes should be monitored very closely, mainly because the monitoring causes changes in students' strategies, cognitions, effects and behaviours (Schunk, 2008). Zimmerman and Campillo (2003) proposed three cyclical phases for the processes of self-regulation, as shown in Figure 2.
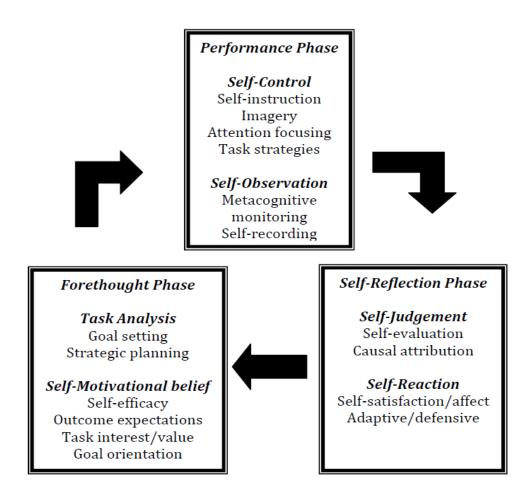
Performance Phase

Self-Control
Self-instruction
Imagery
Attention focusing
Task strategies

Self-Observation
Metacognitive
monitoring
Self-recording

Forethought Phase

Task Analysis
Goal setting
Strategic planning

Self-Motivational belief
Self-efficacy
Outcome expectations
Task interest/value
Goal orientation

Self-Reflection Phase

Self-Judgement
Self-evaluation
Causal attribution

Self-Reaction
Self-satisfaction/affect
Adaptive/defensive

Figure 2. Phases and sub-possess of self-regulation (Source: Zimmerman (2002, p. 67))

The three-phase cyclical model of self-regulation shows the interrelationship among self-generated learning strategies. In these three stages, self-regulated learners combine cognitive strategy use with motivational beliefs and are then influenced by social and environmental factors. As shown in Figure 2.1, the three phases are a continuous process. Throughout the process, students become self-aware of their performance and start to self-monitor their progress, making changes where necessary.

More than the other theories, Social Cognitive theory explains the influences of self-regulated learning on the learners. It also emphasizes that social regulated learning is an individual skill or knowledge and includes social aspects of interactions (Zimmerman, 1990).

In the current research study, the focus was given only to the behavioural component of self-regulation. As Bandura (1986) states, self-observation, self-judgment and self-reaction are needed to be self-regulated to monitor and adjust their behaviour. Self-observation leads to having self-evaluation, which leads to a cognitive judgment that makes to go for personal and behavioural self-reactions (Schunk, 2009). As Bandura (1986) suggests, individual behaviours are very often affected by self-observation, and self-observation can increase motivation which sometimes encourages individuals to change or alter their behaviour.

As self-observation is important for self-regulation, observation evaluation also plays a vital role. Self-judgment denotes comparing one's performance with that of a standard or goal. Self-judgment consists of personal standards, activity valuation, and attributions (Bandura, 1986). Self-judgment very often leads to having self-reaction. Thus, based on personal observations, individuals judge their progress towards achieving the set goals, and they alter their behaviour to achieve these goals and encourage performance; rewards will be used.

1.4.   Significance of the Research

In the Sri Lankan context, research on self-regulated learning strategies' impact on ESL learners is scant. There has been no extensive research study carried out in the ESL context in Sri Lanka, particularly considering the effects of ESL learner behaviour on language learner performance. Thus, findings from this research will add to strategy instruction and may provide researchers with additional means for investigating the impact of behaviour on second language learning research and its relation to learner performance.

In addition, the findings will also provide empirical information on how to integrate strategy instruction in a regular ESL curriculum which will contribute to teaching innovative ideas into the design of language learning lessons using self-regulated learning strategies. The ESL students will also be guided to incorporate self-regulated learning strategies into their language learning and increase learner performance, motivation and even self-efficacy

1.5.   Objectives and Research Questions

The current study examined the role of self-regulated learning strategies in language learning among ESL learners. Yet it only focused on the self-regulated strategies relevant to behavioural elements among behaviour, environment, and personal factors. To examine the main objective of the current study, Bandura's Social Cognitive theory was used. By conducting the present study, the researcher intends to improve ESL learner motivation and learner autonomy in language learning classrooms where learners depend too much on their language lecturers/ instructors. Moreover, it also is expected that the findings would support enhancing ESL learners self-observation, self-judgement and self-reaction in language learning. Thus, the current study will be guided by the following research question:

1) How do the behavioural factor's in self-regulated learning strategies influence the language learning process of ESL learners?

2. Methodology

1.1.   Research design

The current study employed a qualitative case study approach. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research is '… an intrinsic fabric composed of minute threads, many colours, different textures, and various blends of materials. This fabric is not explained easily or simply. Like the loom on which the fabric is woven, general assumptions and interpretive frameworks hold qualitative research together (p. 42)'

For Creswell (2013), the researcher is an artist who creates a fabric of qualitative research. Qualitative research also allows researchers to have the freedom to develop their research projects. Yin (2003) points out four factors which should be considered for the use of case study approach: a) the main aim of the study is to answer the questions of how and why questions, b) when the researcher cannot manipulate the behaviour of the participants, c) when you want to cover context-specific conditions and d) when the boundaries are not clear between facts and context. This approach also supports dealing with simple to complex situations. Besides, the case study approach also permits collecting data from different sources and connecting the data to illuminate the case, including an in-depth exploration of complex phenomena within some specific context (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Thus, it was assumed by the researcher that the qualitative case study approach would allow to take part in the research process energetically and to have a better idea of how the behavioural component in self-regulated language learning would impact ESL learners' language learning trajectory while closely aligning to Bandura's Social Cognitive theory.

1.2.   Research site

The setting of the current study was a public university in Sri Lanka. The selection of the university was purposive. Out of the seven Faculties at the university, the Faculty of Allied Health Science (AHS) was chosen for the current research, mainly because there are international students whose First language (L1) is English in other faculties. AHS is the only faculty with local day scholars who speak English either as a second or third language. If there had been international students whose L1 is English in the sample, the researcher would not have been able to achieve her main research objective, gauging to what extent there is an improvement of the academic writing skills of ESL learners. The university uses English as its medium of instruction for all the faculties.

1.3.   Participants

For the current study, five participants were purposively selected from one of the public universities in Sri Lanka. Before choosing the participants for the current study, the researcher obtained the university's consent to utilise the undergraduates as the study sample. In purposive sampling, researchers "deliberately seek certain types of elements because those cases are judged to be typical of some case of interest to the researcher" (Davidson & Tolich, 2003, p.118). There were three female and two male students in the sample, those who were ranged in the age group of 23-24. Two were from urban

areas, and four were from rural areas. They have been learning English for more than thirteen years, and all of them use English as a second language. Since the interviews were conducted several times and took long and detailed information, the selection of the participants was based purely on their willingness to share their experience with me. As Dornyei (2007) points out in qualitative inquiry, it is important to find individuals who can share "rich and varies insights into the phenomenon under investigation" (p.126) to maximize what can be learnt.

1.4.   *Language course*

The language course that provided the context for this study was Academic English offered in Semester one for the second year. For the faculty of AHS, English is offered for four semesters. English is not offered as a subject for the third and final year undergraduates. English is not a GPA subject for the undergraduates at AHS faculty, but they must complete the English course to complete their degree programme.

In their second year, the focus falls on improving their academic reading, writing, listening and speaking skills and enhancing their research writing skills. One semester consists of 15 weeks, and each week two hours have been allocated for English. There are around 30-35 students in one class, and these classes consist of mixed-ability groups. To assess students' performance in the course, three summative assessments and a final examination are used. The summative assessments are completed both individually and in groups. Marks are offered based on individual performance. The final grade is offered by calculating both assessment and marks of the final examination.

1.5.   *Data collection instruments*

For the data collection, interviews and field notes were used. Interviews are more convenient and need less preparation than written texts. An interview guide approach was used for interviewing the selected participants. Under the interview guide approach, structured and semi-structured interviews were conducted. The interviews were conversational and situational, having greater flexibility and freedom (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Each participant was interviewed three or four times. This supported me to get more clarifications and explanations. Through structured and semi-structured interviews, the researcher expected to collect multiple participants' views towards self-regulation learning strategies related to the behavioural factor. All of the interviews were conducted in English. After finishing the interviews, all the interviews were transcribed and given to the participants to check accuracy. Field notes were used to keep a record of my classroom observations. Field notes were also be used to keep a record of my reflections after the interviews with the participants. Finally, all the gathered data were analyzed following the qualitative research tradition.

1.6.   *Ethical Considerations*

While I was conducting the study, I was fully aware that I should always respect the participants' values, needs, and rights (Merriam, 2001). Before

collecting data, the participants were met physically and explained how the researcher planned to collect the data, restore them, and use the data. After that, written permission was collected from the participants. Pseudonyms were used to make the participants anonymous and to protect their identities. The name of the university was also not revealed. It was stated that if they wish to withdraw, they are allowed to do so during any preferred study time.

1.7. Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used for qualitative data analysis. The primary purpose of using thematic analysis was to identify and analyse the patterns in qualitative data in the current study. The approach to thematic analysis was developed with a six-phase process; familiarization with the data, coding, then searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and finally writing up (Clarke & Braun, 2013).

3. Findings

The results were derived from the participants' interviews, field notes, and other relevant documents. The focus of each case was to find out the influence of the self-regulated strategies in behavioural factors for the language learning process.

3.1. Learner One
3.1.1. Seeking information

Learner one has mentioned that she wanted to improve her vocabulary as she thought she was not good. Thus, she used different strategies to improve her vocabulary. She said that she read e-books, newspapers and got the support of the internet to improve her vocabulary. She even watched movie series to learn some new words and improve her listening. Since she was also not very confident when speaking in front of others, she practised some phrases and dialogues while watching movies. She even talked with her lecturer in English whenever she got the opportunity. Moreover, to improve her self-confidence, she read the newspapers and some e-books aloud. Learner one also checked the meaning of the problematic words because she firmly believed she needed a rich vocabulary to speak fluently and with much confidence.

3.1.2. Seeking Assistance

She always sought support from more knowledgeable friends when encountering a subject-related issue. She sometimes noted her mistakes and the corrected forms or advice for continuous use.

> *"Some lectures are more difficult to understand and some activities are more difficult to complete. In such cases I also get help in my friends. Debates, speeches are more difficult for me. Because I can't understand how to do that's properly".*

When her friends could not explain or clear her doubts completely, she always sought the support of her language lecturer. Since she was not confident in delivering speeches and taking part in debates, she always got

the support of her lecturer when she was getting ready for such activities. She even used library books and got the support of the internet for clarifications.

3.1.3. Goal Setting and Planning

Learner one mentioned that she always got the support of library books, the internet, and friends before doing an assignment. Further, she mentioned that she always wanted to get good marks for the assignment and finally get a good English grade. Thus, she always planned her work before starting working on them. She even used Google translator and a medical dictionary when studying a medical-related text in the English modules.

> *"When doing assessments, I refer previous lectures related, notes and also, I discuss with my friends to share ideas and also, I prefer searching through internet and referring to the books related to the subjects"*

Further, she stated that she always referred and studied the notes before the end semester examination because her main aim was to get good marks for her English paper as it is essential when she is going to start her future career and her higher studies. To motivate and hasten her work, she always pasted the deadlines of the assignments and the dates of the written examinations on the wall. This encouraged and inspired her to complete and manage her work within the given time and reach the deadlines with fewer issues.

3.1.4. Managing Emotions

She was a very determined person to improve her English proficiency. She believed that if she wanted to improve her language proficiency in English, she had to work hard for that. She said that she used English whenever she got a chance with her friends and even the lecturer.

> *"What I always believe is that, nothing is impossible. If we need to achieve something, we must work hard for it and its always possible to achieve. So, we should keep on trying. I have the same theory on improving the English language. If we use daily and keep using and practicing, it will never be impossible to be an expert in English"*

She said she often watched English movies to improve her listening skills and vocabulary. Apart from that, she watched Youtube videos to enhance her Grammar. She also stated the follwing.

"………. try to find new ways of learning English and get the maximum use of them. I have scheduled my time table with 2 hours daily for English achievements"

Sometimes, when some friends tried to demotivate her by telling her that English is not essential as it was a non-GPA subject, she always avoided participating in such conversations. Instead, she often encouraged her

friends to improve their proficiency in English as it would be highly important in their future.

3.1.5. Structuring Learning Environment

She always preferred to study in a quiet environment without any disturbances. As she mentioned, the place is crucial because only if she can concentrate then only, she can focus on her studies. Thus, she often sought very quiet places to do her studies and always kept her books and other materials in order.

"I believe that the learning environment matters to what we achieve through learning. To do our studies with a clear mindset, we need a peaceful learning background".

3.1.6. Self-evaluation

She preferred to get feedback from the language lecturer and her colleagues to improve her language competency. She also got support from the internet, such as completing and marking the activities and evaluating her progress.

"I use an activity series to evaluate my reading and writing skills. After I do the relevant activity within the given time, I mark the answers and understand my faults. I used to listen Youtube lesson series and to check my improvement"

3.2. Learner Two

3.2.1. Seeking Information

Learner two mentioned that she sought information from her friends, the internet and library books. She even watched English movies to improve her listening skills and vocabulary. In addition, she used the Oxford dictionary to improve her vocabulary. She even recorded the lecture series and used to listen to them several times and sought the support of the language lecturer for clarifications.

"I browse internet and use books and e-books for additional information. I use master guide English activity series. I record and listen English lessons also. Whenever I can I use the public library also. I get the support of some of my close friends also"

Learner two mentioned improving her listening skills, and she used to listen to podcasts. She found that listening to podcasts supported her a lot to improve her listening and speaking skills, and it even made her learn a lot of new words that she often used in her writing and speaking.

3.2.2. Seeking Assistance

She always sought the support of her language lecturer when she had issues in the lesson or any other language-related matter. If she could not, she

always got the support of her friends or seniors. Further, she also got support from the internet to improve her language competency.

> *"When the lecture series is running, I ask directly from the conductor of the lecture when she offers us the chance to ask question regarding the series. I get some knowledge and guidance from the seniors and take the help of my close friends who have more advance knowledge than me"*

3.2.3. Goal Setting and Planning

She stated that she always scheduled her work to meet the deadlines and manage the workload. After each lesson, she went through them after coming home and taking notes on important tasks. In addition, before doing an assignment, she always discussed it with her friends and got the support of the internet and library books. She even got ready for the lessons before going into the lecture. Learner two was expecting to do higher studies; thus, she planned to improve her English knowledge and get a good grade for English.

> *"Reading and understanding the lessons on the day before and being prepared for the class is very useful .For assessments referring the given books and tutorials and related documentaries helped to achieve good grade. I am planning to get A for English, as I want to do my Msc".*

3.2.4. Managing Emotions

Learner two mentioned that she always watched videos of speakers' who spoke fluently and famous personalities to motivate herself to improve her English. After she got the marks for the written papers and assignments, she measured her level and started doing exercises related to weaker areas to improve her level of English.

She often listened to songs and read English novels when tired and bored. She tried to improve her language knowledge, vocabulary and speaking. She said she listened to songs, read books, and used her hobby to enhance her language competency.

> *"By watching, listening and reading visuals and novels, which I find amusing and use them in improving English"*

3.2.5. Structuring Learning Environment

Learner two always preferred a less noisy place to study. She also mentioned that she had charts on the wall that she found easy to memorize when she often saw them. She also preferred to join a study group in which she found easy to discuss the matters and share knowledge than studying alone. She also made her studying area very clean to make her learning environment comfortable and learner-friendly.

3.2.6. Self- evaluation

She always did some online exercises and evaluated them according to the given marking scheme to improve her English knowledge. For reading also, she mentioned that she read texts several times till she got the meaning before answering the given questions. She also preferred to get her answers marked by the language lecturer and evaluate her progress.

> *"After doing activities I mark the answers according to a marking scheme or show to lecturer. Joining online listening and answering questions to improve English knowledge. Practicing the reading until I get the meaning."*

She sometimes recorded her speaking and listened to them to check her mistakes or got the support of her friends for the evaluation. She always tried her best not to repeat the same mistakes.

3.3. Learner Three

3.3.1. Seeking Information

Learner three sought additional information from the language lecturer, friends, seniors, internet and library books. She even read English newspapers to improve her reading and writing skills. She also used the Oxford dictionary and thesaurus to improve her vocabulary.

> *"I always get information from the internet. There are many websites for learning English, and I also learn English from videos and TV shows. I also use English books and dictionaries, asking things I don't know from my teachers and adults"*

Apart from the lessons she learnt in the language learning classroom, she read English novels, comics, TV series, Google translator, English lyrics to improve her knowledge in English.

3.3.2. Seeking Assistance

She always sought assistance from the language lecturer and senior students or her friends.

> *"I ask friends, senior students about things that I do not understand. If I have something very difficult to understand, I ask the lecturer."*

She always got the support of Grammarly before submitting the assignments. She wanted to submit the assignments with very few mistakes. She always rehearsed it before presenting when she got ready for a presentation. She even checked the script with one of her friends or senior students.

3.3.3. Goal Setting and Planning

She usually got ready for the lessons before going to the class. Even for the assignments, she started to find information on the day it was given to meet

the deadlines and better organize the work. She always thought about the marks she would get for the assignment to keep her motivation unwavering.

> *"I clearly determine how I'm going to organise my studying. And I set specific goals for myself each time. I sit down to study to complete an assignment. I think about the marks which I'm going to get. Then I motivate myself to do that and then try my best to do it"*

She always wanted to improve her academic writing skills, as she was hoping to complete her postgraduate studies. Thus, she read many library books e-books and listened to podcasts and always planned her work.

3.3.4. Managing Emotions

Learner three always motivated herself, thinking about her future and the importance of English for her future career and higher studies. She even made positive talks to encourage when her language lecturer corrected many of her mistakes.

> *"I imagine myself in the future and think about that I'm going to do my higher studies well. I remember that I'm already good and also remember there is a lot that I don't know. Then I think that I should do my best to improve my English Knowledge"*

Learner three rewarded herself when she performed better for examinations and assignments. She went for dinner out with her friends, or she watched movies. Occasionally, she bought books to keep her achievement as a memory.

3.3.5. Structuring Learning Environment

Learner three firmly stated that she avoided using social media when studying as it disturbed her concentration. She even had a particular room in her house where she had less noise, and she mainly chose this place to have a peaceful environment for her studies.

> *"If there is a good learning environment, then education will be easier. I also try to maintain a good learning environment to make education easier. For that, I avoid using my mind for unnecessary activities. I avoid talking to friends too often. I use social media only for essential activities."*

She even mentioned that she chose to study at night since there were fewer disturbances when everyone fell asleep. She also found that she can concentrate more at night than in the daytime. She chose to sit with students who did not talk during the lectures in the language learning classroom. With all these efforts, she wanted to improve her English competency.

3.3.6. Self-evaluation

Learner three used simple words when she had conversations with others in English. She had an issue with her vocabulary and grammar. Thus, she took extra grammar lessons and notes when the lecturer taught grammar. When she was doing exercises, she always checked the answers and corrected them, and she got the clarifications if there was a difficult area that she could not understand. Moreover, she mentioned she sought the support of spell checkers and Grammarly before submitting the assignments.

> *"I do activities on the part that I had problems with. Then I check them whether what I did was right or wrong. If they are correct, I evaluate my progress. If they are wrong, I try to do that again and try my best to do that correctly or ask madam"*

3.4. Learner Four
3.4.1. Seeking Information

Learner four mainly sought support from the internet and his colleagues. He mentioned that

> *"I refer books, magazines, E-books, newspapers. I also listen to English songs, Watch movies and videos with subtitles. I ask my parents, friends and madam also"*

He often talked to friends who spoke English fluently to improve his speaking skills. He said he liked to engage in competitions, debates and group presentations to enhance his self-confidence and speaking skills. He said that he used Oxford and Sinhala dictionaries to improve his vocabulary. To improve his listening skills, he used to listen to podcasts. He also mentioned that.

> *"Apart of English lessons the most common source in which I use to develop my English skills is reading books. I read classic to science fictions to mystery books. This also helps me to find new words and understand them through different literature aspects. I also read English newspapers and watch English shows to improve my English."*

3.4.2. Seeking Assistance

As the other learners, he also got support from the English lecturer and friends when he had difficult areas. As he said, when he wanted to make clarifications, he

> *"….. used to ask questions after the lecture from the lecturer, for clearing the doubts. And also I usually get helps for solving subject matters from my friends whose knowledge is more advanced than mine. They share their notes with me. So, I study them to correct my mistakes"*

Further, he mentioned that he always paid careful attention before submission assignments since he is not very good at academic writing. He always participated in group discussions on answering the given questions and even got additional information from the internet to submit a very informative work.

3.4.3. Goal Setting and Planning

Learner four was getting ready for the lessons before the lecture, and he even browsed the internet to find additional information to enhance his knowledge. Before attending the lecturer, he noted the problematic areas to ask the lecturer the next day.

> *"If I have a lesson or a lecture, I get ready for that today. I restudy what we have learned before. And I also get ready for the next lesson by referring the pdf files and reference books the lecturer has send us."*

Learner four was very particular about his English assignments, as he mentioned. Thus, after getting an assignment, he always met the language lecturer and discussed his difficult areas to perform better. He planned to improve his academic writing skills, as they have to research in the final year. Therefore, he read journal articles and subject related books to improve his academic writing skills.

3.4.4. Managing Emotions

Learner four stated that he posted some blog posts when he had language difficulties. When his blog posts were answered, he was pleased, encouraging him to continue posting and clarifying his language difficulties. He also listened to English music and watched short films to overcome boredom, and at the same time, he tried to understand their accent.

When getting good marks for the assignment, he celebrated his efforts by dining out with his girlfriend. His girlfriend's praise motivated and encouraged him to perform better in his future assignments.

3.4.5. Structuring Learning Environment

He also used to study in places where he found it less noisy. He pointed out that he wanted everything to be neat and in order before studying. He also mentioned that studying in crowds was challenging, so he always used isolated places for studies.

> *"I want a quiet and isolated place for myself-learning process and also need everything to be arranged neatly around me. If the place is lot of people, I can't study, I got distracted"*

Further, he mentioned that he always made sure to turn off the television and the radio before starting studying. If he did not have a relaxed and less noisy environment, it would be very difficult to concentrate on what he was studying.

3.4.6. Self-evaluation

Learner four repeated the dialogues and songs he downloaded from the internet and learned new words/phrases. He also learned to pronounce words correctly after listening to them several times. While doing grammar activities, reading comprehensions, and marking them, he always tested his progress. Going through the corrections made by the lecturer, he always tried to understand his level of English and tried to improve his level by correcting his mistakes.

He even personally met the language lecturer and asked what areas he needed to improve and the additional books he needed to refer to improve his language competency.

3.5. Learner Five

3.5.1. Seeking Information

Learner five always thought it was good to get support from others when he had doubts about some lessons, exercises, and assignments and presentations. Since he wanted to improve his knowledge in grammar, he used to watch Youtube videos, do grammar exercises, and if there were clarifications to be made, he always got support from his language lecturer. He said that he also used to take notes when the lecturer was conducting lectures for future reference. He referred to library books, newspapers, and relevant documentaries to get additional information.

> *"I take down notes of the lecture for studies. I get additional information to complete my language learning tasks from the notes that given by lecturers, books and newspapers in English, documentary."*

3.5.2. Seeking Assistance

Learner five used to give extra writings to the language lecturer to mark and correct his language errors. He said he learned a lot from those corrections, but sometimes he could not submit the write-ups due to his busy schedules. Further, he mentioned that his language lecturer always praised his determination and courage, which encouraged him to improve and participate in lectures with interest.

He even got support from his friends. He did not ask the answers from the friends; instead, he asked only the way of doing it. After that, he tried to complete it. He also added that he never copied answers from others. He always sought guidance from more advanced students and then completed the exercises.

> *"When I can't understand the parts of the language, I ask help either from teachers or my classmates also. I just ask about the path, not the complete answer and they helped me to find the answer with proper way. I never copy from others."*

3.5.3. Goal Setting and Planning

Learner five was planning to join the academic field after finishing the degree. Thus, he was working from his first year to achieve his goal. Even

though English is a non-GPA subject, he worked hard to improve his English competency. If he wanted to join academia, he needed sound English knowledge. Thus, he was trying hard to improve his language competency even from his first year.

He always took notes during the lecture and referred them after coming home. The note-taking was very supportive when he did the assignments and answered the questions. Since the total mark for the final examination was counted taking both assignments and marks of the written exam, he always planned his work beginning of the term. He always included further information in his assignments to score additional marks, referring to library books and browsing the internet. He repeatedly emphasized his desire to join academia and how hard he worked to reach that goal.

3.5.4. Managing Emotions

Learner five always thought about his goal, which always encouraged and motivated him to work hard. He even went through the comments of the language lecturer and checked his marks when he found some difficult areas and scored some low grades for some assignments. He even encouraged his friends when they tried to ignore completing language worksheets. The positive talk was one of the ways he used to boost his energy whenever he was down and bored. Relaxing and going out with friends were also used to energize him before continuing the work.

> *"I'm a Day dreamer. I always think about to be a lecturer. I guess it helps to motivate myself for improve my English language knowledge. On the other hand, English is the international language. Therefore, it is important to improve speaking skills of English and it motivated me to improve myself because it is important to show off my knowledge in public as an undergraduate"*

3.5.5. Structuring Learning Environment

Learner five always prefers to have a conducive learning environment for his studies, including language learning. Due to the noisy environment at home, he rented a room close to the university that he often used. Moreover, before studying, he listened to some songs or watched a short film to relax his mind. He believed the mental relaxation supported him concentrating on what he was learning.

> *"I always want calm environment for studies. My boarding place is not crowded, so I can study well there. I need my mind relaxed first before studying"*

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The study investigated the impact of self-regulated learning strategies on behavioural factors for ESL learners' language learning process. The findings indicate that the learners varied in their self-regulatory competence and strategies in behavioural variables.

The learners all use information seeking from different sources. Almost all the participants sought the support of the internet. Some used library books

and newspapers to improve their language learning skills. At the same time, they also sought the support of their language lecturer when their friends and other sources could not support them in clarifying their doubts. They also joined group discussions which they consider supported them a lot in collecting information, especially completing assignments. They also got the support of Grammarly to check their language errors before their assignment submissions. They all are aware of the importance of English for their future career and higher studies; thus, they all made an effort to improve their language competency using resources available both inside and outside the language learning classroom. It also stated that self-regulated learning is a metacognitive process that encourages learners to improve their thinking to understand and assess the results of their actions and plan novel pathways to success (Pajares, 2008).

They never let them demotivate themselves, thinking English is a non-GPA subject. Many of them used self-talk to motivate them to improve their language competency. They even avoided colleagues who tried to demotivate them, telling English is not important for their future. Some of the participants are planning to join academics, and some are planning to do higher studies; therefore, they always made an effort to improve their language competency. Whenever they became down, when they scored low marks for English, they always thought about their goals and boosted themselves to improve their proficiency. This agrees with Zimmerman (2002), who states that the learners will succeed academically while seeing their future opportunities very positively due to self-regulated learning.

They also mentioned that they often went out for a movie or dinner when they were bored to energize themselves. They also rewarded themselves when they performed better for the assignments and written examinations. This also motivated them to learn English with interest. As per Zimmerman and Schunk (2004) self-reaction is an evaluation of self-judgment. Hence, individuals judge based on their progress by following personal observations toward self-set goals and changing their behaviour to reach these goals. After revising the exceptional standards and giving rewards, the individuals are encouraged for performing.

All five learners firmly stated that they all worked hard to meet the deadlines of the assignments. They also worked hard for the written examination to get a better grade. Before the examination or completing an assignment, they all had a strong plan to achieve their target. Most of them referred to library books, browsed the internet for extra information.

According to Bandura (1986), to be self-regulated, individuals need to use self-observation, self-judgement and self-reaction, which support individuals monitoring and regulating their behaviour accordingly. Schunk (2009) posits that self-observation leads to self-evaluation, leading to personal and behavioural self-reaction. In self-observation, one is deliberately observing their behaviour. Self-observation can increase motivation when one realizes the individual act, which often causes to react and alter the behaviour.

The participants in the current study did the self-evaluation apart from their language lecturer's evaluation on their performance. When they did presentations, debates they sought the comments of their peers and the language lecturer. All these comments supported them in correcting their

weaknesses in language proficiency. Some of them mentioned that they recorded their speeches and presentations before performing them in the classroom. The recordings supported them to improve their presentations strengthening the weaker areas. Those who were weak in grammar and writing did some self-studies and used to correct written answers referring to the given answer key and sought support only when they needed clarification. As Zimmerman and Schunk (2001) point out, due to the use of individual willpower and learning skills in some occasions self-regulated learners take ownership of their learning.

All participants preferred their studies to do in a calm and quiet environment. Some of them chose to join study groups when discussing study matters to improve their language knowledge. According to them, the learning environment is vital because mental relaxation for studies is a significant factor considered by all the participants. The impact of a relaxed mind in a quiet learning environment also motivated learners to maximize self-regulating strategies in language learning.

The results in the current study agree with Pintrich's (1995) idea of self-regulated learners controlling their behaviour, motivation, affect, and cognition to accomplish their goals. Moreover, as individuals, they try to control their actions. By controlling their behaviour and environment, the self-regulated learners seek to achieve their goals.

In line with social cognitive theory, the current study results indicate that all the participants made an effort to self-regulate their language learning in some way or another. Yet, what differentiates them from each other is the quality and quantity of each individual's self-regulatory processes. The results also confirm that self-observation, self-judgment and self-reaction are needed to be self-regulated to monitor and adjust their behaviour. As individual behaviours are very often affected by self-observation, self-observation can increase motivation, which sometimes encourages individuals to change or alter their behaviour. Further, it should be highlighted that teachers should encourage learners to be autonomous learners by understanding the individual student's internal factors and readiness. Self-regulated learners should have their own learning goals and take responsibility for their learning while controlling personal thoughts, behaviour and environment.

As Hamer (2004) illustrates, the teacher is a motivator who provides a source of information, suggestions and guidance. The role of teachers can be best interpreted as facilitators who offer more space for the choices of their learners in a learner-centred context (Perry, VandeKamp, Mercer & Nordby, 2002). As Shankr (2010) posits, there will be more opportunities for self-regulated learning strategies in such a learning context.

The findings in the study also highlight the importance of social support. The language lecturer and their peers supported the participants to regulate their language learning. These findings emphasize the significance of positive student-teacher interaction in promoting self-regulation. These outcomes of the current study also bring attention to organizing the language learning classes to plan and organize to facilitate these ESL learners to develop their self-regulation.

These findings and conclusions have significant implications in self-regulation study, social cognitive theory and ESL classroom teaching. The importance of pedagogical interventions is also emphasized to foster students' ability to take responsibility for their learning and develop themselves into self-regulated language learners. The findings show that self-regulation is not an innate ability; it can be changed and improved.

It is proposed to conduct more exploratory qualitative studies in various contexts for further avenues. It is also suggested to conduct studies on self-regulated learning strategies and gender differences. Moreover, further studies could be conducted on the impact of environmental and personal variables and self-regulated language learning strategies use by ESL learners.

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