

## **EFL LEARNERS' SELF-REGULATED LEARNING STRATEGIES IN ISLAMIC PRIVATE UNIVERSITY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Numbers of research had proven self-regulated learning strategies to be effective in foreign language learning contexts. This study aimed to investigate EFL learners' most frequently-used self-regulated learning strategies in English learning in one of the Islamic universities in Indonesia when it was still in COVID-19 pandemic. To reveal the answers, the writer involved 90 undergraduate final year students as participants, by utilizing a quantitative method of survey design. The data was gathered with an online questionnaire of Google Form and was distributed through WhatsApp. To analyze the data, Microsoft Excel and SPSS version 25 were used in observing the mean and percentage. It was discovered that in learning English through self-regulated learning strategies, EFL learners' most frequently-used strategy was metacognitive ( $X=3,98$ ), followed by cognitive strategy ( $X=3,47$ ), compensation strategy ( $X=3,38$ ), affective strategy ( $X=3,38$ ), social strategy ( $X=3,33$ ), and the least frequently used was memory strategy ( $X=3,30$ ). Suggestions and recommendations were provided for the further research.

**Keywords:** EFL Learners, Undergraduate Students, Self-Regulated Learning Strategies

## INTRODUCTION

Strategies are needed in every learning, one of which is in language learning. The aims of enacting the strategies to learn a language are to ease and accelerate the learning process by doing more enjoyable and more self-directed actions. Furthermore, learners can be more transferrable in new situations (Oxford, 1990). In order to cultivate the self-directed actions of the learners, there is found a strategy called self-regulated learning. Self-regulated learning (SRL) is one of the domain-specific models and research on self-regulation. For English learning context, there are many studies have revealed the use of this strategy across the globe. Pintrich cited in Seker (2015), stated that self-regulated learning is a condition where learners actively and constructively set their learning objectives. In doing so, they need to control, monitor and regulate the learning. Schunk & Greene, (2017) emphasized that the features aforementioned are grouped into learners' cognition, metacognition, behavior, motivation, emotion and environment. In short, self-regulated learning is a strategy that is adopted by students not only physically but also mentally. In addition, these facets can not be separated in a self-learning process.

Self-regulated learning concerns the application of a general model of self-regulation and regulation related to learning problems, especially academic learning. There are four general assumptions of Self-Regulated Learning proposed by Pintrich (2000). The first assumption is the active and constructive assumptions, which follow from a general cognitive perspective. Students are assumed to actively form their values, objectives, and strategies from both external and internal information in their environment and their thoughts. The second assumption is that learners are assumed able to monitor, control, and regulate particular matters within their cognition, motivation, behavior, and other matters that come from the environment. The third assumption is that students can customize goals or standards to struggling in the learning, watch their progress according to the goals set, then adjust and control their cognition, motivation, and behavior to achieve the goals. The fourth assumption is the mediation of self-regulatory between learners' personal and contextual characteristics and their actual achievement or performance. Not only learners' cultural, demographic, and personal characteristics, but also their cognition, motivation, and behavior affect their achievement in learning. He concluded that self-regulated learning is a condition where learners set their learning objectives under the process of active and constructive. Attempts to control, monitor, regulate are needed in the service of those aims directed and limited by learners' characteristics and the environment's contextual features.

Some experts mentioned that there are various types of self-regulated learning strategies.

1. Vermunt & Donche (2017): there are two strategies in self-regulated learning such as cognitive and regulation strategies. Cognitive strategy refers to learners' capability to comprehend learning materials and the process of how they do so. Moreover, learning

pattern attributes to learners' achieving goals' success. Meanwhile, regulation strategy refers to learners' phase of their self-regulated learning in which planning or contemplation, performance, evaluation, and reflection are included.

2. Pintrich & De Groot (1990): there are three strategies of self-regulated learning namely self-regulation strategy, cognitive strategy, and motivational strategy. Self-regulation strategy comprises metacognitive and effort management strategies, meanwhile, cognitive strategy comprises rehearsal, elaboration, and organizational strategies.
3. Zimmerman (1989): learners' use of self-regulated learning strategies includes their knowledge of strategies, the use of metacognitive decision-making processes, and their performance outcomes. He stated that there are 14 strategies divided into 3 main categories; the strategy of personal function, behavioral function, and environmental function.
4. Oxford (1990): postulated 2 kinds of strategies to learn a language such as direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies are the ones that involve the target language directly meanwhile indirect strategies are the ones that don't involve the target language directly amid the language learning. Although these strategies focused on language elements, however, they are still in line with the concept of self-regulated learning since there are some of the self-regulatory elements (Seker, 2015). Direct strategies cover the memory (creating mental linkages, applying images and sounds, reviewing well, employing actions), cognitive (practicing; receiving and sending messages; analyzing and reasoning; creating structure for input and output), compensation (guessing intelligently; overcoming limitations in speaking and writing), meanwhile the indirect strategies consists of metacognitive (centering your learning; arranging and planning your learning; evaluating your learning), affective (lowering your anxiety; encouraging yourself; taking your emotional temperature), social (asking questions; cooperating with others; empathizing with others).

Learners who adopt self-regulated learning properly while learning English will gain some benefits both in cognitive and metacognitive sides. They are also trained and prepared to be self-regulated for themselves and other people in general. For instance, they will be easier to get a job because they have the capability to self-control both of their hard and soft skills. Aligning with this fact, some researches have revealed that self-regulated learning strategies are used in regulating learners' foreign language anxiety (Guo et al., 2018), predicting learners' academic achievement (Seker, 2015), predicting students' reading comprehension ability (Abbasian & Hartoonian, 2014), and motivating students in improving language proficiency (Fukuda, 2018).

In Indonesian universities' context itself, self-regulated learning has been researched in EFL learning areas. Ariyanti et al., (2018) undertook a study about self-regulated learning and EFL's writing skills, Wijayanto & Supriyadi (2020) drew their research on self-regulated learning's strength, weakness, and the learners' perception regarding learning through YouTube with self-

regulated learning strategies. Sayukti (2018) also carried out their research on the integration of self-regulated learning strategies and discovery learning of English in making lesson plan. However, those studies are mostly focused only on one skill in EFL learning. Therefore, the writer of this study carried out the self-regulated learning strategies towards broader aspects of EFL learning skills.

In order to confirm the necessity of this research, the writer had conducted preliminary research to know the learners' knowledge, perception and frequency of self-regulated learning. 20 EFL students of one the English study program in Islamic private university in Jakarta, Indonesia. The table below describes the demography and the findings of the preliminary research.

**Table 1.**  
**Preliminary research**

<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>10</b>	Female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All of them know and are familiar with the term of Self-Regulated Learning</li> <li>- All of them have ever applied Self-Regulated Learning</li> <li>- Most of them apply Self-Regulated Learning frequently</li> </ul>
<b>10</b>	Male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 4 out of 6 don't know and aren't familiar with the term Self-Regulated Learning</li> <li>- Most of them have ever applied Self-Regulated Learning</li> <li>- Half of them apply Self-Regulated Learning frequently</li> </ul>

*(data was taken on January, 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> 2021)*

From the information gained by the researcher, EFL learners mostly know about self-regulated learning in a general context. Besides, most of them have ever applied the use of self-regulated learning in terms of learning English. However, some learners don't apply it frequently. Most of them have difficulties in doing self-regulated learning, for instance, they need lecturers or friends to give feedback on the learning, cannot manage time, lack motivation, and difficult to find sources to learn independently. The researcher presumed that the difficulties aforementioned happen because the learners have lack knowledge of self-regulated learning in a whole context, and don't

aware of the strategies that they apply in SRL. Therefore, based on the background described above, the researcher is fascinated to do this research. The goal of this study was to find out the undergraduate EFL learners' of most frequently-used self-regulated learning strategies. Besides, since the setting of this research was in COVID-19 pandemic, it was crucial to explore their self-regulated learning strategies in order to ensure if they still can perform any ways or methods to maintain their self-learning.

## METHODOLOGY

This research aimed to investigate EFL learners' self-regulated learning strategies in learning overall English skills. To measure the most frequently-used strategies, the writer used quantitative descriptive by utilizing a survey design. Quantitative survey design was chosen because it is normally used to figure out issued about people also to describe and measure any generalized components, for instance students' attitude, perception, etc (Cohen et al., 2018). This study utilized an online questionnaire adopted from Oxford (1990) called SILL (Strategy Inventory Language Learning) to reveal the answer of this research question. This instrument consists of 50 items and classified into 6 categories namely memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social. The verbal frequency scale from 1 (never or almost never true of me) to 5 (always or almost always true of me) was used. To gather the data, the writer input the instrument into google form and distributed it online through WhatsApp in a week. After the data gathered, it was analyzed by using Microsoft Excel and IBM SPSS Statistic version 25. First of all, the whole data tabulated in Excel and the categories were analyzed by using Oxford (1990)'s formula. Afterwards, the SPSS was used to analyze the data frequency (per item). The descriptive statistic (frequency) feature was used to find the mean and percentage from each question on the instrument.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the present study, there were 6 categories of self-regulated learning strategies that were studied; memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social. The tables below serve the result of overall average of the strategies and the rank of individual strategies used by the EFL learners.

**Table 2.**

**Overall average of the strategies (calculated with Oxford (1990)'s SILL formula).**

Rank	Strategies	N	X	Level
1.	Metacognitive (Organizing and evaluating Learning	90	3.98	High
2.	Cognitive	90	3.47	Medium

	(Using all mental processes)			
3.	Compensation (Compensating for missing knowledge)	90	3.38	Medium
4.	Affective (Managing emotions)	90	3.38	Medium
5.	Social (Learning with others)	90	3.33	Medium
6.	Memory (Remembering more effectively)	90	3.30	Medium
	<b>TOTAL OF OVERALL STRATEGIES</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>3.49</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>

The table above shows that the most frequently-used of self-regulated learning strategies based on its high average is metacognitive (how learners organize and evaluate their learning)  $X=3.98$ . It is followed by the rest of the strategies; cognitive ( $X=3.47$ ), compensation ( $X=3.38$ ), affective ( $X=3.38$ ), social ( $X=3.33$ ) and memory ( $X=3.30$ ). Overall, it is indicated that EFL learners in this study only perform self-regulated learning strategies in sometimes frequency, they are categorized as medium user of the strategies. This is in line with Sartika et al., (2019); Navahandi (2014); Riazi & Rahimi, (2005). Despite, this calculation is based on the overall average of the 6 strategies showed various levels ranging from high to low in each of those 6.

**Table 3.**  
**Top 10 Individual Strategies with HIGH level (calculated with the frequency feature of SPSS).**

No.	Aspects	Strategies	N	X	Level	Individual Rank
32.	Metacognitive	I pay attention when someone is speaking English	90	4.56	High	1
33.	Metacognitive	I try to find out how to be a better learner of English	90	4.27	High	2
31.	Metacognitive	I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better	90	4.16	High	3
38.	Metacognitive	I think about my progress in learning English	90	4.16	High	4

<b>39.</b>	Affective	I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English	90	4.07	High	<b>5</b>
<b>12.</b>	Cognitive	I practice the sounds of English	90	4.05	High	<b>6</b>
<b>37.</b>	Metacognitive	I have clear goals for improving my English skills	90	4.03	High	<b>7</b>
<b>40.</b>	Affective	I encourage myself to speak English when I am afraid of making a mistake	90	4.01	High	<b>8</b>
<b>1.</b>	Memory	I think of relationship between what I already know and new things I learn in English	90	4.00	High	<b>9</b>
<b>42.</b>	Affective	I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English	90	3.97	High	<b>10</b>

In terms of the most-frequently used strategy that is metacognitive, this strategy covers the learning centering, learning arrangement and planning and learning evaluation. This indicates that the students in this study are able to plan, arrange, monitor, and evaluate their own learning. This process is enacted in order to achieve their learning goals that have been set before the learning (Alfian, 2018). In addition, the 5 highest of the top 10 strategies above are metacognitive strategies which emphasized that the learners have control over their language learning. According to Zimmerman (1989) a learner can be depicted as a self-regulated learner when they can employ strategic control over personal influences as metacognitive skills is one of them. Herewith, we can assume that EFL learners in this study are self-regulated considering their high use of metacognitive strategies. Furthermore, this finding is in line with Pintrich & De Groot (1990) 's second assumption of self-regulated learning that stated learners are assumed able to monitor, control, and regulate in the learning, also Vermunt & Donche (2017) who claimed self-regulated learners plan, evaluate and reflect within their learning.

The cognitive strategy covers practicing, receiving, and sending messages, analyzing and reasoning, and creating a structure for input and output. In this study, cognitive strategies found to be in the second row of the most-frequently used strategies after the metacognitive. It is found that one of the cognitive strategies in this study that was practicing to voice like a native speaker claimed by (Oxford, 1990) when the students do so, meaning that they can enhance their pronunciation and the use of vocabulary, structures, idioms, gestures, intonation, and style. Despite its position on the second row, the average use was only medium ( $X=3.47$ ) which means it is only

used sometimes. Since cognitive is one of the direct strategies in language learning, it can be assumed that the medium used is possibly caused by the lower exposure of Indonesian EFL learners towards English. Therefore, they need extra effort to perform this type of strategies such as the ones covered in it. Fortunately, they are proven as learners who employ metacognitive strategies beyond the cognitive one, as a result, they can control the learning to approach the cognitive sides.

Compensation and affective strategies in this study came as the 3<sup>rd</sup> rank of the frequently used strategies and categorized as medium ( $X=3.38$ ). Compensation strategies cover learners' ability to guess and to use the new language either in understanding or producing despite their knowledge limitations, while affective reflect learners' control of their anxiety and emotional temperature and self-encouragement. Although in the total calculation it is grouped as the 3<sup>rd</sup>, compensation strategies in this study such as making guesses, using gestures, using words or phrases that has the same meaning and affective strategies such as trying to relax whenever they're afraid, encouraging oneself, noticing their tenseness were found high in the calculation of individual strategies.

Speaking of the 3 compensation strategies mentioned above, it may indicate the lack of knowledge to communicate in English which is in line with Riazi & Rahimi (2005) who found those similar strategies were highly used due to the communicating knowledge lacking from the learners. On the other hand, the medium used of this strategy as a whole is possibly due to learners' lack of interest in learning activities concerning the use of new languages to produce or comprehend it. This was most likely owing to their weak English basic skills, as it is similar to Rianto (2020)'s findings. Therefore, when they want to produce or understand the new language, they employ these strategies to allow them to go through the language learning process. However, concerning the fact of students' high use of making guesses strategy to understand English unfamiliar words, it can be expected that learners branded as a good language learner as Oxford (1990) claimed that language learners who faced with unknown expressions and initiate educated guesses are good ones.

In affective strategies, there are 50% of students often trying to relax whenever they feel afraid of using English and encourage themselves to speak English even when they are afraid of making mistakes. Also, 46.7% of students often notice if they are tense or nervous when using or studying English. The high use of those strategies assumes that learners can control their emotional temperature and lower anxiety, and at the same time, they aware of the importance of employing affective strategies since several learning activities tend to create learners' anxiety as one of them is speaking in front of the class. It is evidenced by Riazi & Rahimi (2005) who claimed that learners paid a lot of attention in applying this strategy to lessen their fear in the learning activity. By undertaking an affective strategy, EFL learners are potentially able to attain their learning success, because one of the most significant factors on language learning success or failure comes from



learners' affective side. It is contradicted with (Shih 2019) who found that learners with more anxiety, resulting in less self-efficacy, fewer self-regulatory strategies, less motivation amid the personal goal-settings process they will exert, therefore, worse or failed personal performance might happen.

Social strategy is found to be the less frequently used by the learners and still in the medium category of the overall strategies ( $X=3.33$ ). It contradicted with Banisaeid & Huang (2015) whose findings revealed that social strategy was one of the most frequently used by the learners. Assuming that EFL learners in this study are more likely to use strategy dealing with the planning, monitoring, analyzing reasons, practicing, guessing educated, regulating emotion, and lowering anxiety. In addition, it is possibly because they think oral discussion, conversation without visual support might yield anxiety and confusion. It is proved by Reid (1987) as his subjects who were Korean EFL learners used less frequently this strategy. In fact, Zimmerman & Pons (1986, 1989) claimed that self-regulated learners tend to seek social assistance for instance from teachers in order to perform their environmental structuring. As well as the memory strategy in this study, it is the least frequently used by the learners but still categorized as medium ( $X=3.30$ ). This happens because not only the EFL learners used other strategies more frequently, but also it possibly due to their levels are beyond elementary of language learning, or as well as they don't aware of using it because memory strategies are broader than other strategies. It is supported by Oxford, (1990) as she claimed that there were some researches proving this rarely used strategy because of those reasons.

To keep in mind, the 4 strategies that are categorized as a medium, are not all at medium levels, this refers to the individual strategies shown in findings. Speaking of individual strategies, some of them are high and some other are low. This happens possibly due to various factors for instance students' cultural background (Beauquis (2000) cited in Riazi & Rahimi (2005)), motivation (Banisaeid & Huang, 2015), language skills, and achievement (Taheri et al., 2020), gender (Navahandi, 2014). However, as language learners, they are free to choose what strategies suit them most, even though each of those strategies has its strength and advantage to improve skills, attain language achievement, etc. For instance, cognitive strategies indeed have a positive impact on language performance particularly on their English tests (Peng, 2012), and they are efficient in learners' reading comprehension process (Ghafournia, 2014). Interestingly, the effectiveness of this strategy is significantly correlated with other strategies such as compensation and affective strategies. Another example is compensation's great role in the capability of predicting learners' achievement of speaking, listening, and reading stronger than other strategies (Atlan (2003) cited in (Taheri et al., 2020). Memory strategy which became the infrequent used and positioned as the last of all indeed was the most frequently-used strategy that Iranian EFL learners used. Moghadam et al. (2013) revealed that the high use of memory strategies in their study was because the learners were memory-oriented in their language learning process.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, as a whole strategy considered by the average, there is one highest strategy which is the most frequently used by EFL learners in this study that is **metacognitive strategy**. The rest 5 strategies are categorized as a medium level such as cognitive, compensation, affective, social, and memory. By means, EFL learners in this study are medium users of the strategies. However, the individual strategies showcase range levels from high to low based on the students' frequency. Therefore, it is assumed that some factors are contributing to their use of those various strategies, they can be cultural background, language achievement or skills, motivations, genders, etc. To this extent, other parties excluding the student such as lecturers or educators, universities or educational institutions must encourage and create a learning environment where various strategies are used, therefore, language learning goals may be attained faster and more effectively than is expected. As Abbasian & Hartoonian (2014) asserted that the more strategies employed by one, the more successful she is amid language learning. Since this study was only focusing on the bigger picture of self-regulated learning strategies and limited to the specific way of data calculation, it is suggested that for further research, to conduct the study with more advance data analysis so that the more comprehensive way to interpret and discuss the result can be gained and conducted. Therefore, the future recommendations related to the promotion of self-regulated learning strategies will be gathered and can be more practical. It is also suggested to study about the influences of each other's' strategies to see if those strategy can support and promote one and another.

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