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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Examining EFL Undergraduates' Self-Regulated Motivation in English: A Survey Study

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| ABSTRACT

Self-regulated learning is an active, conscious and reflective learning style which emphasizes that learners should monitor, evaluate and adjust their own learning process to achieve the best learning results. Good self-regulated motivation can help learners overcome difficulties in English learning and improve the effectiveness of English learning. The purpose of this study is to explore the self-regulated motivation of EFL undergraduates. This paper investigates the self-regulated motivation of EFL undergraduates in three universities in Guangxi to explore the current status of their self-regulated motivation and the demographic factors affecting their self-regulated motivation. This study adopts the form of a questionnaire to investigate the target group and draws conclusions by analyzing and summarizing the survey results using SPSS. The results of the survey showed that the self-regulated motivation of the participants was generally not high. Most of them were at a moderate level. Among them, participants' participation and regulation of the learning environment, regulation of affect, regulation of the classroom environment, and task value activation were all at moderate levels. In addition, the survey results showed that gender and academic year did not have a significant impact on participants' motivation levels. This study investigates the current situation of self-regulated motivation of EFL undergraduates, which has certain reference value for improving the learning motivation and learning ability of EFL undergraduates. These problems can be further explored in future studies to promote the cultivation of self-regulated learning ability of EFL undergraduates.

| KEYWORDS

Self-regulated motivation; EFL undergraduates; self-regulated learning.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

With the advancement of globalization, English, as the common language for international communication, has become an important skill necessary for college students. Self-regulated motivation can be defined as the behavior of an individual to establish, maintain, or enhance their willingness to perform, endeavor, or accomplish a specific task or goal (Wolters, 2003). Self-regulated motivation refers to students' self-regulatory attempts or strategies to control motivational beliefs to maintain self-regulated learning (Uztosun, 2020). The process of self-regulated motivation involves assessing one's level of motivation for academic work and making adjustments to maintain or improve that level of motivation (Wolters & Benzon, 2013). Students can use motivational strategies to help them start learning, stay motivated in the face of obstacles, or shift their focus from learning to learning goals (Smit et al. 2017). This indicates that self-regulated motivation is helpful in improving students' learning efficiency. Students may control or overcome their fears and anxieties when speaking English and try to maintain a high level of confidence (Salsabila & Maharsi, 2023). Students who control negative emotional states have more opportunities to improve their EFL speaking ability (Uztosun, 2021). It can be seen that good self-regulated motivation can help them overcome difficulties in English learning

and improve the effect of English learning. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the self-regulated motivation of EFL undergraduates.

The purpose of this study is to explore the self-regulated motivation of EFL undergraduates. This paper investigates the self-regulated motivation of EFL undergraduates in three universities in Guangxi to understand the status of their self-regulated motivation. Through the investigation and analysis of this study, we can evaluate the self-regulated motivation of EFL undergraduates and provide certain reference values for educators to help these students improve their learning motivation and learning ability.

Specifically, this study aims to answer three questions:

1. What is the level of self-regulated motivation of EFL undergraduates?
2. Do demographic variables influence students' self-regulated motivation?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definition of Self-Regulated Motivation

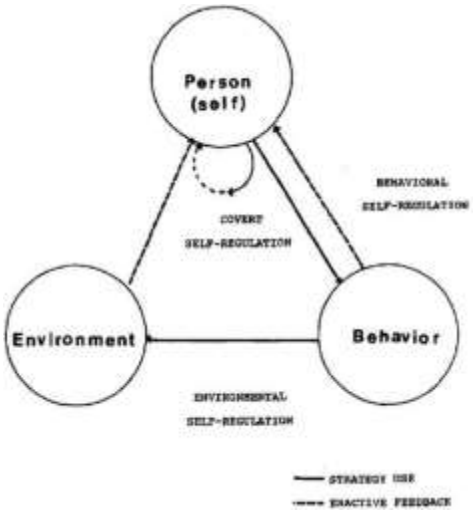
Self-regulated motivation is a component of self-regulated learning, a process that involves goal setting, self-monitoring, self-assessment, and self-reflection (Zimmerman, 1989). According to (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2008), self-regulated motivation conceptualizes how motivation is associated with learning and how learning behaviors change accordingly. Zimmerman argues that continued learning is necessary (2015), while at the same time, it should be seen as a fundamental determinant of self-regulated learning and achievement (Dörnyei, 2005).

According to self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020), types of self-regulated motivation include intrinsic motivation and three types of extrinsic motivation, manifested as a continuum from external regulating motivation to inward regulating and recognition regulating. Self-regulated motivation is not only about why students are motivated to learn (internal vs. external) but also about how actively they control their learning process. It incorporates motivational, behavioral, and cognitive strategies for engaging and mastering the learning material. Self-regulated motivation is the idea that self-regulated learners acquire and maintain self-regulating influences that stimulate and drive their goal-oriented efforts (Usher & Schunk, 2017; Zimmerman, 2020).

Kryshko et al. (2020) note that motivational regulation strategies (e.g., mastering self-talk, environmental control, performance methods self-talk, and self-reasoning) can potentially improve academic performance. By making these points, learners can self-regulate their learning motivation to improve their academic performance.

2.2 Theories of Self-Regulated Learning

Self-regulated learning motivation was first proposed by Zimmerman. It originated from the American educational psychology circle's reflection on the three educational reform movements after World War II (Meng & Li, 1999). Zimmerman (1989) proposed a three-dimensional model of self-regulated learning based on Bandura's social learning theory, arguing that self-regulated learning is determined by the interaction of individuals, environments and behaviors. As shown in the figure below：



The self-regulated learning 3D model is a process that helps students improve their academic performance by cultivating their positive motivation concept, increasing their knowledge of learning strategies, and applying learning strategies to learning

activities in a habitual way (Zhang & Pan 2006). According to the social cognitive theory, the process of self-regulation learning can be divided into three interacting behavioral processes: self-observation, self-judgment and self-reaction. Through self-regulated learning, students can self-control, self-monitor, and self-evaluate their pace of learning. They can also customize and manipulate the prevailing learning according to their learning needs (Alotumi, 2021).

2.3 Motivation Regulation Strategies

In the 1980s, foreign educational psychology began to pay attention to the nature of motivation, which prompted researchers to study learner motivation regulation strategies (e.g. Wolters,1998; Li, 2009). Wolters (1998) found that students used a variety of strategies to regulate their motivation, and when faced with different motivation problems, they used different motivation regulation strategies. Mc Cann &Garcia (1999) distinguished three types of motivation and emotion control strategies: self-efficacy enhancement, stress relief, and negative outcome assumption; Li (2009) identified eight motivational regulation strategies: interest enhancement, performance goal arousal, mastery goal arousal, self-reward, consequence assumption, task value enhancement, volitional control, and self-efficacy enhancement. Wolters (1998) carried out relevant research on American college students and middle school students and identified five motivation regulation strategies: self-motivation, environmental control, mastery goal arousal, performance goal arousal and interest enhancement. At the same time, his research also shows that motivational regulation strategies can predict learners' cognitive and metacognitive strategy use and learners' effort level and classroom performance.

2.4 Current Situation of Self-Regulated Motivation

There has been considerable progress made in self-regulated motivation research at home and abroad over the last 18 years.

Salsabila and Maharsi (2023) conducted a questionnaire survey and found that English language education students in a private university in Yogyakarta had a higher level of self-regulating motivation in the first, second and third grades. The results showed that they used all motivational adjustment strategies to improve their oral English ability and found that task value evaluation was the most regulated among other motivational factors. In addition, their research also found that teachers also play a crucial role in students' self-regulating motivation. Highly motivated students tend to participate in class activities and seek opportunities to speak English with their classmates or friends (Uztosun, 2021), which is also supported by the findings of Salsabila and Maharsi (2023), who also suggest that teachers should provide a conducive, safe and comfortable learning environment in the classroom.

Alotumi's (2021) study found that EFL college junior and senior students' self-regulated motivation for improving English speaking reveals that the overall level of self-regulated motivation in improving English as a foreign language ranged from medium to high.

Lee and Gao (2014) investigated the level of self-regulating motivation of gifted high school students by using large-scale data from the Korea Education and Employment Council and found that gifted high school students showed a higher level of self-regulated motivation and had higher levels of self-regulating motivation than their government-funded counterparts. Their research showed that gifted high school students were more inclined to adopt self-regulating motivation than other students.

2.5 Influencing Factors of Self-Regulated Motivation

The impact factors of self-regulation motivation have been explored in various studies, yielding mixed results, particularly concerning gender and academic year.

Regarding gender differences, Salsabila & Maharsi (2023) found no significant effect on the motivation for self-regulation among students, while Alotumi (2021) identified a slight but statistically significant difference favoring female students, suggesting that female students may possess higher levels of self-regulation skills than their male counterparts.

In terms of the academic year, the consensus among researchers like Alotumi (2021) and Salsabila & Maharsi (2023) is that the academic year does not significantly affect students' self-regulation motivation. These studies suggest that students across different academic levels share a similar motivation to improve their learning outcomes through self-regulation, indicating that factors other than academic year might play a more pivotal role in influencing self-regulation motivation.

The regulation of affect, focusing on how students manage their emotions, is another critical factor impacting self-regulation motivation. According to Uztosun (2021), Efklides et al. (2017), Guo et al. (2018), and Pintrich (2004), the ability to handle negative emotions such as fear and anxiety through emotional strategies is essential for maintaining and enhancing motivation for self-regulation. Efklides et al. (2017) further indicate that emotional responses, whether positive or negative, can significantly affect cognitive processing and metacognitive experiences, thereby influencing students' engagement in learning tasks.

Lastly, the learning environment has been shown to significantly influence self-regulation motivation. Baeten, Dochy, & Struyven (2013) argue that the learning environment directly affects students' autonomous motivation. Similarly, Chou (2018) observed how the medium of instruction (all-English vs. part-English) impacts Taiwanese EFL students' confidence, anxiety, and emotional states, affecting their motivation for learning English. Uztosun (2020) found that students with a high degree of environmental control could overcome the limitations of inadequate learning environments by seeking alternative opportunities, thus enhancing their self-regulation motivation.

3. Methodology

To answer research questions, the research method of questionnaire survey was used in this study.

3.1 Research Participants

Participants in this study included 332 EFL undergraduates from three universities in Guangxi, comprising 204 females and 128 males. The average age of the participants was 19.4 years. Among them, 139 were in their first year, and 193 were in their second year.

3.2 Instrument

According to the instrument, the Likert scale ranges from "1" to "7." Each point represents a distinct level of agreement or disagreement: 1 indicates "strongly disagree," 2 indicates "disagree," 3 indicates "somewhat disagree," 4 indicates "either agree or disagree," 5 indicates "agree," 6 indicates "strongly agree," and 7 indicates "strongly disagree."

The first section of the instrument is specifically designed to collect demographic data of the students, encompassing categories such as their gender, age, and current academic year. The second section includes a scale to investigate EFL learners' self-regulated motivation for speaking. The scale comprises four dimensions: task value activation, regulation of the learning environment, regulation of affect and regulation of the classroom environment. Task value activation investigates students' perception of the importance of the task, personal interest in the task and perception of the utility value of the task for future goals. "regulation of the learning environment concerns the individual's attempts to overcome the drawbacks of learning EFL in an input-poor environment by finding ways to practise the spoken language" (Uztosun, 2020, p. 7). Regulation of affection investigates students' regulating affective issues. "Regulation of classroom environment refers to an individual's attempts to engage in class." (Uztosun, 2020, p. 8) The four dimensions, namely, task value activation, regulation of learning environment, regulation of affect and regulation of classroom environment, recorded reliability scores of 0.902, 0.931, 0.924, and 0.938, respectively. What's more, all items demonstrated factor loadings exceeding 0.63, with an average variance extracted value surpassing 0.5, while the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio, not exceeding 1, further confirmed both convergent and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2019).

4. Results and Discussion

Since this study adopted a 7-Likert scale, the mean value between 1-3.00 is considered a "low" level of practice, while the mean values between 3.01-5.00 and 5.01-7.00 are considered "moderate" and "high" levels of practice, respectively.

4.1 Task Value Activation

Based on Table 4.1, all items from TVA1 through TVA7 are within the "moderate" to "high" range of activation of task value. Particularly, TVA2 (M=5.15), TVA3 (M=5.25), and TVA7 (M=5.11) are classified at "high", indicating a high level of satisfaction with these tasks. A substantially greater value is perceived by TVA1 (M=4.30), TVA4 (M=4.98), TVA5 (M=4.68), and TVA6 (M=4.76) than by items classified as "moderate."

Table 1 Descriptive Results of Each Item of Task Value Activation

Item No.	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
TVA1	I remind myself that I need to speak English well	4.3	1.49	Moderate
TVA2	When the teacher speaks English, I listen carefully to his/her speech	5.15	1.27	High
TVA3	I try to be interested in and willing to learn English	5.25	1.26	High
TVA4	When I speak English, I learn from my mistakes.	4.98	1.28	Moderate
TVA5	In order to speak English more correctly, I learn from the mistakes other people make when they speak English	4.68	1.47	Moderate
TVA6	In English lessons, I try to pay attention all the time	4.76	1.29	Moderate
TVA7	I try to find ways to increase my motivation to speak English	5.11	1.17	High
Overall		4.89	1.05	Moderate

4.2 Regulation of Learning Environment

The descriptive data in Table 4.2 show that participants in the regulation of the learning environment dimension exhibit a moderate level of practice. The participants, on the Mean, show "moderate" engagement with and regulation of their learning settings, with a mean score of 3.40 and a standard deviation of 1.47. Each item on this dimension displayed a consistent pattern in learning environment regulation, scoring between 3.01 and 5.00. There was a minor variation in the results for individual items, with ROLE1 having the highest average score of 3.70 and ROLE4 having the lowest with 3.11.

Table 4.2 Descriptive Results of Each Item of Regulation of Learning Environment

Item No.	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
ROLE1	I try to find friends from abroad.	3.70	1.69	Moderate
ROLE2	I try to chat with foreigners in English on the internet.	3.52	1.72	Moderate
ROLE3	I make contact with people whose mother tongue is English.	3.24	1.66	Moderate
ROLE4	During the holidays, I try to visit places with a lot of tourists in order to improve my spoken English.	3.11	1.64	Moderate
ROLE5	When I meet foreigners, I try to practice my English.	3.42	1.63	Moderate
Overall		3.40	1.47	Moderate

4.3 Regulation of Affect

The descriptive statistics in Table 4.3 of the regulation of affect dimension indicate that participants typically demonstrate a moderate to high level of affection regulation in their learning situations. The mean of 4.02 is within the "moderate" range but leans towards the upper end, indicating a significant level of effectiveness in managing emotions. The similarity in individual item scores, with minor differences, indicates a consistent use of emotional regulation strategies by the individuals in the study.

Table 4.3 Descriptive Results of Each Item of Regulation of Affect

Item No.	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
ROA1	I can overcome my fear when I speak English.	3.96	1.5	Moderate
ROA2	I can overcome my anxiety when I speak English.	3.95	1.5	Moderate
ROA3	I try to keep a high level of self-confidence when I speak English.	4.16	1.43	Moderate
Overall		4.02	1.38	Moderate

4.4 Regulation of Classroom Environment

The data in Table 4.4 shows that participants often display a modest level of engagement in managing their classroom environments. The average of 3.84 falls within the "moderate" category, indicating a consistent method of controlling classroom environments. Each item varies somewhat but stays within the moderate engagement range, with ROCE3 indicating the highest level of agreement or practice in regulating the classroom environment.

Table 4.4 Descriptive Results of Each Item of Regulation of Classroom Environment

Item No.	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
ROCE1	I use every opportunity to speak English during lessons.	3.88	1.55	Moderate
ROCE2	I talk English with people I know (e.g., classmates flatmates).	3.53	1.61	Moderate
ROCE3	I try to participate as much as possible in English speaking activities in class.	4.04	1.57	Moderate
ROCE4	I make a point of speaking English in class.	3.82	1.55	Moderate
ROCE5	I spend time with friends who encourage each other to speak English.	3.94	1.52	Moderate
Overall		3.84	1.4	Moderate

4.5 Demographic Differences in Self-Regulated Motivation

Table 4.5 indicates that there were no significant differences in self-regulated motivation across individuals based on gender or academic year. The F-value of 0.566 and p-value of 0.452 indicate that there are no statistically significant gender differences. Standard deviations and mean scores suggest a constant level of self-regulated motivation between participants in their first and second academic years. An F-value of 0.146 and a p-value of 0.703 indicate that there is no significant difference in motivation based on the academic year.

Table 4.5 Demographic Differences in Self-Regulated Motivation

Variable	Case	Mean	S.D.	F	*p*
Gender				0.566	0.452
Male	128	4.1344	1.16206		
Female	204	4.1176	1.08451		
Academic Year				0.146	0.703
1	139	4.1344	1.16206		
2	193	4.1176	1.08451		

5. Conclusion

According to the above survey on undergraduates in three universities in Guangxi, their task value activation, regulation of learning environment, regulation of affect and regulation of classroom environment are all at "moderate" levels, with the overall value of self-regulated motivation also at a moderate level. This finding is somewhat consistent with the finding of Alotumi (2021), indicating a range from medium to high in self-regulated motivation among EFL students. However, this finding contradicts the results reported by Salsabila and Maharsi (2023) and Lee and Gao (2014), who observed higher levels of self-regulated motivation in their respective studies. Salsabila and Maharsi's research on English language education students highlighted a pronounced engagement with task value and a significant teacher role in enhancing motivation within the classroom environment. This suggests a more dynamic interaction between students and the learning content, as well as the educational setting, which might contribute to higher motivation levels. Similarly, Lee and Gao's study on gifted high school students identified a greater propensity towards self-regulated motivation strategies, underscoring the influence of innate abilities and perhaps a more supportive educational environment tailored to gifted students' needs.

However, according to the survey results of demographic differences, there was no significant difference in the data of the two variables, which means that the academic year and gender of students do not impact the level of self-regulated motivation. The alignment with Salsabila & Maharsi (2023) on the lack of significant gender differences in self-regulation motivation suggests a broader trend that self-regulated learning strategies might be universally applicable or appealing across genders within certain contexts or disciplines. This is further supported by the consensus between our study and both Alotumi (2021) and Salsabila & Maharsi (2023) regarding the non-significant impact of the academic year on self-regulated motivation. However, this finding is exactly the opposite of the survey results of Alotumi（2021), who reported a slight but significant gender difference favoring female students in self-regulated motivation. The different results of this survey may be affected by factors such as differences in survey samples or regional differences.

The regulation of affect, as explored by Uztosun (2021), Efklides et al. (2017), Guo et al. (2018), and Pintrich (2004), emerges as a critical determinant, highlighting the importance of emotional management in sustaining self-regulation motivation. Efklides et al. (2017) and Ge (2021) further elaborate on how emotional responses can profoundly influence cognitive and metacognitive processes, impacting learning engagement. This emphasis on emotional regulation underscores the need for strategies that help students navigate emotional challenges to maintain motivation.

Moreover, the role of the learning environment in shaping self-regulated motivation is underscored in the work of Baeten, Dochy, & Struyven (2013), Chou (2018), and Uztosun (2020). These studies collectively point to the significant impact of educational settings on motivation, with Chou (2018) specifically highlighting how different mediums of instruction affect EFL students' confidence and motivation. Uztosun (2020) further illustrates the potential for students to enhance their self-regulation motivation by actively modifying their learning environments to better suit their needs.

6. Implications, Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study explores the self-regulated motivation of EFL undergraduates and the factors shaping it. Our findings from three universities in Guangxi reveal a moderate level of learning motivation among the participants. However, this challenge can be effectively addressed through targeted interventions. Nurturing students' initiative and interest in learning emerges as a pivotal strategy for enhancing self-regulated motivation. Equally crucial is the provision of education on effective learning strategies and

methods, alongside encouragement for the utilization of diverse learning resources and channels. Furthermore, fostering interaction and cooperation within classroom environments emerges as a significant catalyst for boosting students' learning efficiency and motivation. Through the implementation of various improvement strategies, we can elevate students' learning motivation and enhance their self-regulated learning ability, thereby fostering improvements in their academic performance.

Nonetheless, this study faces certain limitations. The sample size, comprising 332 undergraduates from three Guangxi universities, may not be fully representative. Future research endeavors should encompass larger and more diverse samples to enhance the generalizability of findings. Additionally, reliance on questionnaire surveys may introduce subjective biases. Future studies could employ a range of research methods, such as interviews and observations, to ensure a more comprehensive understanding. Moreover, while this study primarily focuses on self-regulated motivation, it may overlook other influential factors, such as social and subject-specific environments.

Future research should incorporate additional variables to capture the multifaceted nature of student motivation. While offering valuable insights, this study represents a preliminary exploration and is subject to certain limitations. Future research should address these limitations to yield more nuanced and accurate findings.

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