



SELF-REGULATED LEARNING SKILLS OF PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERSⁱ

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Abstract:

This study aimed to investigate the self-regulated learning skills of pre-service English language teachers in terms of gender and grade level. The sample of the study consisted of 223 pre-service English language teachers who study at a state university in Turkey. For data collection, the '*Self-regulating Learning Skills Scale (SRLSS)*' was used. Data were analyzed quantitatively via SPSS by using descriptive statistics, independent samples t-test, and one-way between-groups ANOVA. Descriptive statistics indicated that pre-service English language teachers have a high level of self-regulated learning skills. In addition, the participants' self-regulated learning skills differed based on gender, in favor of females. Moreover, a statistically significant difference was found only between second and third graders. The results were discussed regarding previous research and some pedagogical implications and suggestions were made. This research yields an important opportunity for further understanding of pre-service EFL teachers' SRL skills. This study aspires to be beneficial for English language teachers, teacher educators, and curriculum developers.

Keywords: self-regulated learning skills, self-regulation strategies, teacher education, pre-service English language teachers, English Language Teaching (ELT)

1. Introduction

The study of self-regulation gained prominence in the 1990s, and since then it has become one of the most central constructs in psychology (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). Self-regulation is described as a '*dynamic*' and '*process-oriented*' construct that emphasizes learners' strategic efforts to manage their own learning in accordance with specific processes and beliefs (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997). The growing attention to self-regulation in academic environments has resulted in the emergence of a new term, "*self-regulated learning (SRL)*" (Dinsmore et. al., 2008). SRL refers to "*an active, constructive process whereby learners set goals for their learning and then attempt to monitor, regulate, and*

ⁱ This study was presented orally at Educongress 2022.

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control their cognition, motivation, and behavior, guided and constrained by their goals and the contextual features in the environment” (Pintrich, 2000, p. 453).

As stated by Zimmerman (2001), SRL is a multidimensional phenomenon that embodies motivational, behavioral, environmental, cognitive, and metacognitive processes. It has been posited by social learning psychologists that there is a sequencing of stages that comprise SRL. For example, Zimmerman’s SRL model (2002) consists of three phases that are cyclical. According to this model, the first phase is *‘the forethought phase’* which is divided into two main components as *‘task analysis’* and *‘self-motivation’*. Task analysis involves setting goals and planning strategies for learning. Self-motivation includes students’ beliefs such as intrinsic/extrinsic motivations, self-efficacy beliefs, and outcome expectations. The second one is *‘the performance phase’* which is subdivided into *‘self-control’* and *‘self-observation’* processes. Self-control refers to putting specific methods and strategies into practice. Self-observation refers to self-recording and cognitive tracking of personal performance. The last one is *‘the self-reflection phase’* which is comprised of *‘self-judgement’* and *‘self-reaction’* processes (Zimmerman, 2002).

In the 21st century, it is of utmost importance to raise individuals who have the ability to construct and manage their own learning. In this direction, teacher candidates are expected not only to transfer information from their teachers, but also to seek ways for more information and sources, construct their own knowledge, and create opportunities for learning (Michalsky & Schecter, 2013). In this respect, pre-service teachers are expected to have self-regulated learning skills and are able to:

- Set their learning goals clearly,
- Take action according to their learning aims, needs and interests,
- Employ effective learning methods and strategies,
- Create opportunities for learning,
- Make efforts in line with learning objectives,
- Manage their time effectively,
- Utilize educational and technological sources efficiently,
- Show perseverance and determination throughout the learning process,
- Find practical solutions when faced with an obstacle,
- Assess their learning process and outcomes.

Pre-service teachers who are well-developed with self-regulation strategies can choose, adapt, and create new strategic approaches to achieve their learning goals. They have the ability of planning and organizing, accessing and using the necessary sources and materials, evaluating, and reviewing their performance. They are also more confident and diligent in the problems they encounter in their academic life. Because of these reasons, it is very important for pre-service teachers to have self-regulated learning skills. These skills are important not only for their own academic development, but also for transferring/teaching these skills to their students in the future.

A plethora of research was conducted on self-regulated learning skills of English language learners around the world (Chen et. al. 2019; Guo et al., 2018; Kormos & Csizér, 2014; Teng & Zhang, 2016; Tseng et al., 2006; Ting & Chao, 2013) and in Turkey (Adigüzel & Orhan, 2017; İlbeği & Çeliköz, 2020; Yağlı, 2014). In addition, a large number of studies

examined the self-regulatory learning skills of pre-service teachers from different departments in Turkey (Bozpolat, 2016; Cebesoy, 2013; Çelik-Ercoşkun & Köse, 2014; Gömleksiz & Demiralp, 2012; Sağırlı et. al., 2010; Yüksel, 2013) and in the world (Buzza & Allinotte, 2013; Michalsky & Schechter, 2013; Shower, 2010). However, to the best of the author’s knowledge, there is a scarcity of research that examine pre-service English language teachers’ self-regulated learning skills in terms of different variables. It is believed that this research will shed light on other studies to be conducted on this issue by filling the relevant gap in the literature.

In this framework, the purpose of this study is to investigate the self-regulated learning skills of pre-service English language teachers and determine whether these skills differ based on their gender and grade level. In line with this purpose, the following research questions will be sought throughout the study:

- 1) What are the self-regulated learning skills of the pre-service English language teachers?
- 2) Do pre-service English language teachers’ self-regulated learning skills show a significant difference according to their gender and grade levels?
- 3) Do pre-service English language teachers’ self-regulated learning skills indicate a significant difference with regard to their grade levels?

2. Methodology

This study is a cross-sectional survey study which adopts a quantitative methodology for data collection and analysis.

2.1. Participants

The participants of the study comprised 223 pre-service English language teachers studying at the Faculty of Education at a state university in Turkey. Participants were selected by using the convenience sampling method on a voluntary basis. Demographic information of the participants is presented below:

Table 1: Demographic information of the participants

Variables		f	%	Total
Gender	Females	153	68.6	223
	Males	70	31.4	
Grade	1 st grade	41	18.4	223
	2 nd grade	78	35.0	
	3 rd grade	50	22.4	
	4 th grade	54	24.2	

2.2. Data Collection

Data were collected through *Self-regulating Learning Skills Scale (SRLSS)* which was developed by Turan (2009). Five-point Likert-type scale consists of 41 items and four sub-dimensions; which are named as (1) ‘*motivation and action to learning*’ (7 items), (2) ‘*planning and determining aims*’ (8 items), (3) ‘*strategy using and assessment*’ (19 items),

and (4) 'lack of self-directedness' (7 items). All of the items in the 'lack of self-directedness' sub-dimension were negative, so they were reversed while calculating the score of the scale. Items range from "1: strongly disagree" to "5: strongly agree". To obtain sub-dimensions and total scores, item scores were summed. The increase in the scores obtained from the scale means that teacher candidates have a higher level of self-regulated learning skills. Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient for the whole scale was reported to be .91, while they were .88, .91, .83, .76 for the sub-dimensions respectively (Turan, 2009). In the present study, the Cronbach alpha coefficient for the whole instrument was calculated as .92, while it was .72, .88, .89, .76 for the sub-dimensions respectively.

Before data collection, necessary permissions were granted by the faculty of Education to apply the SRLS to the participants. In addition, a consent form was obtained from the participants indicating that they voluntarily participated in the study. Participants were assured that the collected data will only be used for scientific purposes and will not be shared with any third party or group other than for research purposes.

2.3. Data Analysis

Before data analysis, a test of normality was executed to find out if data were normally distributed or not. Examination of mean/trimmed mean scores, skewness/kurtosis values, and Histogram, Normal Q-Q plots, and Scatter plots revealed the normal distribution of the data (Pallant, 2010). Hence, parametric tests were calculated when analyzing the data with the help of SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) 26.0 software.

In order to reveal pre-service English language teachers' SRL skills, descriptive statistics were calculated. To determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the participants' SRL skills and gender, an independent samples t-test was conducted. Lastly, to detect if the participants' SRL skills differ significantly based on their grade levels (1st -4th), a one-way between-groups ANOVA test was used.

3. Results and Discussion

RQ1: What are the self-regulated learning skills of the pre-service English language teachers?

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for self-regulated learning skills of participants

	N	M	SD
Motivation and action to learning	223	4.13	0.55
Planning and determining aims	223	3.94	0.69
Strategy using and assessment	223	3.89	0.6
Lack of self-directedness	223	3.26	0.75
SRLS total	223	3.83	0.5

With the aim of answering the first research question, descriptive statistics were utilized. As Table 2 shows, the total mean score for the self-regulated learning skills of the

participants was $M=3.83$ ($SD=.50$). Thus, it can be deduced that the pre-service English language teachers have a fairly high level of self-regulated learning skills. When the mean scores of sub-dimensions were scrutinized, it can be seen that the participants get the highest score at the ‘motivation and action to learning’ sub-dimension ($M=4.13$, $SD=.55$), followed by ‘planning and determining aims’ ($M=3.94$, $SD=.69$), ‘strategy using and assessment’ $M=3.89$, $SD=.60$ ‘lack of self-directedness’ ($M=3.26$, $SD=.50$). This finding is in line with the earlier studies (Çelik-Ercoşkun & Köse, 2014, Buzza & Allinotte, 2013) which revealed that pre-service teachers have high level of SRL skills. This result is positive considering the teacher candidates’ learning behaviours during their university life and after they become teachers.

RQ2: Do pre-service English language teachers’ self-regulated learning skills show a significant difference according to their gender?

Table 3: T-test results based on gender

		N	M	SD	t	p
SRLS Total	Females	153	3.88	0.51	2.08	0.038
	Males	70	3.73	0.47		

So as to identify whether the participants’ SRL skills differ significantly based on their gender, an independent samples t-test was conducted. As Table 3 indicates, there was a significant difference in the pre-service English language teachers’ SRL skills for females ($M=3.88$, $SD=.51$) and males ($M=3.73$, $SD=.47$; $t_{(223)} = 2.08$, $p=.038$, two-tailed). Although there is a significant difference, the eta squared value was calculated as .02, indicating a small effect size (Cohen, 1988).

In the literature, some studies similarly reported that female teacher candidates use the SRL strategies more than males (Bozpolat, 2016; Çelik-Ercoşkun & Köse, 2014; Yüksel, 2013). Unlike this result, some studies found that males have higher self-regulation skills (Haşlamam & Aşkar, 2007; Patrick et al., 1999). There are also studies which reveal that gender does not cause a significant difference in SRL skills of teacher candidates (Cebesoy, 2013; Gömleksiz & Demiralp, 2012; Sağırılı & Azapağası, 2009). As can be seen, there are contradictory results in the literature on this variable.

RQ3: Do pre-service English language teachers’ self-regulated learning skills indicate a significant difference with regard to their grade levels?

Table 4: One-way between-groups ANOVA test results based on grade

		N	M	S	df	F	p	Diff.
SRLS Total	1 st grade	41	3.92	0.56	3-219	4.008	0.008	3>2, p<.05
	2 nd grade	78	3.72	0.47	3-219			
	3 rd grade	50	4	0.5	3-219			
	4 th grade	54	3.77	0.46	3-219			

In order to analyse if there is a statistically significant difference among the participants' SRL skills according to their grade levels, a one-way between-groups ANOVA test was conducted. As indicated by Table 4, there was a statistically significant difference at the $p < .05$ level in SRL skills of the participants for two different grades ($F_{(3-219)} = 4.008, p < .05$). In order to evaluate the pairwise differences among the mean values, follow up tests were calculated. According to Tukey HSD test, the only significant difference was between the mean score of the second graders ($M = 3.72, SD = .47$) and third graders ($M = 4.00, SD = .50$), in favour of third graders. However, the effect size was calculated as small ($\eta^2 = .05$, Cohen, 1988). In the literature, some studies found that fourth-grade teacher candidates have a higher level of SRL skills (e.g., Çelik-Ercoşkun & Köse, 2014). On the other hand, some studies reported a significant difference between first and fourth-grade students regarding SRL skills in favor of first graders (e.g., Sağırılı et al., 2010). It can be realized that there is no consistency in the literature regarding this issue.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This research has sought to explore the SRL skills of pre-service English language teachers and determine whether these skills differentiate according to gender and grade levels. The sample of the research comprised 223 pre-service English language teachers who study at a state university in Turkey. Designed as a survey study, data were collected with 'SRLSS' which was developed by Turan (2009).

Results demonstrated that the pre-service English language teachers have a high level of SRL skills. The participants get the highest score in the 'motivation and action to learning' sub-dimension, followed by 'planning and determining aims', 'strategy using and assessment', 'lack of self-directedness'. In addition, there was a significant difference between the participants' SRL skills; females possessed slightly higher levels of SRL than males. Despite reaching statistical significance, there was a very small effect size. Lastly, a significant difference was detected only between second and third graders, with a small effect size.

This study offers a significant opportunity to advance the understanding of SRL skills of pre-service English language teachers. It provides important clues in explaining the teacher candidates' learning and teaching behaviors during their academic life at the faculty and after they become teachers. In this respect, it can be implied that the result of the study is positive in terms of pre-service English language teachers' academic and professional life.

This study can also act as a needs analysis study in terms of questioning the adequacy of English language teacher education programs regarding SRL skills. Based on the findings of the study, it can be deduced that there was not much change in the SRL skills of the teacher candidates over the four years of the teacher education program. At this point, integrating SRL skills into the teacher education curriculum is of great importance. As Pintrich (1995) puts forward, a week or a semester is not enough for developing SRL skills; thus, there should be sufficient time and opportunity to develop

these skills. In this regard, while planning the curriculum, faculty members need to take SRL skills into consideration. They should inform and encourage students to use self-regulation strategies such as setting goals, finding their own learning deficiencies, getting the necessary help, using strategies, self-monitoring, and self-assessing their own learning. They need to provide continuous guidance to pre-service teachers regarding SRL skills and offer feedback when they need help. Moreover, research assignments and projects can be included in the curriculum to improve SRL skills of the teacher candidates. Last but not the least, a variety of seminars, courses, and symposiums can be organized by the faculty and the university which enable the development of SRL skills.

Because of the practical constraints, this study could not provide a comprehensive inspection of SRL skills of pre-service English language teachers. Therefore, it has some limitations as it investigated SRL skills in terms of gender and grade level variables through a self-reported survey. The relationship between teacher education candidates' SRL skills and their academic achievement can be investigated by future studies. Also, different methodologies such as interviews, think-aloud protocols, micro-analyses, focus groups, diaries, and observations can be used. Moreover, further studies can adopt a longitudinal methodology and evaluate the SRL skills of the prospective teachers in each grade level so as to detect the effect of English language teacher education programs on SRL skills of the participants more precisely. Another important issue, the elements which support or hinder SRL skills of the teacher candidates, is advised to be addressed by future studies.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

About the Author

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