



## RESEARCH ON SELF-REGULATED LEARNING ABILITY AND ITS INFLUENCING FACTORS AMONG ENGLISH MAJORS IN THE CONTEXT OF CHINA'S HAINAN FREE TRADE PORT

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### **Abstract:**

Based on the Social Cognitive Theory, this study explores the relationship between self-efficacy, learning motivation, and self-regulated learning ability among English majors in the context of China's Hainan Free Trade Port. Through a survey of 300 English majors from three universities in Hainan Province, it was found that self-efficacy has a significant positive impact on self-regulated learning ability in English, with learning motivation mediating this relationship. The results validate the applicability of the Social Cognitive Theory in the field of English learning and provide theoretical references and practical guidance for enhancing the self-regulated learning ability of English majors.

**Keywords:** self-efficacy; learning motivation; self-regulated learning ability in English; Social Cognitive Theory

### **1. Introduction**

With the accelerated development of China's Hainan Free Trade Port, the importance of self-regulated learning ability among English majors, who serve as crucial bridges between domestic and international contexts, has become increasingly prominent. However, current research on the self-regulated learning ability of English majors remains insufficient, particularly in the specific context of the Hainan Free Trade Port. Therefore, this study aims to explore the relationship between self-efficacy, learning motivation, and self-regulated learning ability among English majors, providing theoretical and practical guidance for improving their self-regulated learning ability.

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## 2. Literature Review and Research Hypotheses

### 2.1 Self-Efficacy and Learning Motivation

Students with high self-efficacy demonstrate greater confidence and perseverance, believing in their ability to successfully acquire English knowledge (Tosuncuoglu, 2019; Masfufah & Chasanah, 2023). When facing learning challenges, these students maintain a positive attitude and persist in overcoming obstacles. This confidence and perseverance are crucial factors in stimulating intrinsic learning motivation, prompting students to engage more actively in English learning activities (Lu *et al.*, 2022; Li *et al.*, 2024). Furthermore, students with high self-efficacy excel in planning and managing learning tasks, precisely grasping their learning progress and workload, and selecting appropriate learning methods and content based on their abilities and interests, thereby enhancing learning efficiency. This self-management and planning ability also contributes to stimulating extrinsic motivation, encouraging students to focus more on learning outcomes and rewards, thus maintaining a persistent learning drive. Based on the above analysis, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H1:** Self-efficacy significantly positively influences the learning motivation of English majors.

### 2.2 Self-Efficacy and Self-Regulated Learning Ability in English

Students with high self-efficacy often exhibit higher confidence and courage in facing English learning tasks (Masfufah & Chasanah, 2023). They believe in their ability to master English knowledge and, when encountering difficulties in the learning process, are more inclined to actively seek solutions rather than easily giving up (Lu *et al.*, 2022; Li *et al.*, 2024). This confidence encourages them to engage more proactively in English learning, constantly trying new learning methods and strategies, thereby improving their self-regulated learning ability in English. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H2:** Self-efficacy significantly positively influences the self-regulated learning ability of English majors.

### 2.3 Learning Motivation and Self-Regulated Learning Ability in English

Learning motivation serves as the intrinsic driving force for students to engage in learning activities. When students develop a strong interest and high motivation in English learning, they participate more actively in learning activities, actively exploring and acquiring new English knowledge (Lu *et al.*, 2022; Li *et al.*, 2024). This positive learning attitude aids in improving self-regulated learning ability in English, as students continuously seek suitable learning methods and strategies to more effectively grasp English knowledge. Based on the above analysis, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H3:** Learning motivation significantly positively influences the self-regulated learning ability of English majors.

**2.4 Mediating Role of Learning Motivation between Self-Efficacy and Self-Regulated Learning Ability** in English Students with high self-efficacy tend to possess greater confidence and perseverance, which helps stimulate their intrinsic learning motivation (An *et al.*, 2021; Masfufah & Chasanah, 2023). When they believe they can excel in English learning, they engage more actively in learning and strive to overcome difficulties. This enhancement of intrinsic learning motivation further promotes the improvement of self-regulated learning ability in English (An *et al.*, 2021; Li *et al.*, 2024). Additionally, self-efficacy may indirectly influence self-regulated learning ability in English through its impact on learning motivation. In other words, students with high self-efficacy exhibit stronger self-regulated learning ability in English due to their higher learning motivation. Based on this logical chain, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H4:** Learning motivation mediates the relationship between self-efficacy and self-regulated learning ability in English.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Participants**

This study selected English majors from three universities in Hainan Province as research participants, considering the representativeness of the region, the academic backgrounds and research foundations of the students, as well as the characteristics of these universities in terms of disciplinary advantages and educational resources. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed, with 265 valid responses, yielding an effective response rate of 88.33%.

#### **3.2 Research Instruments**

The study employed the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) by Schwarzer *et al.* (1997), the Learning Motivation Scale by Amabile *et al.* (1994), and the Self-Regulated Learning Ability Questionnaire by Deregözü (2014) as research tools. All scales have undergone reliability and validity testing to ensure the reliability of the measurement results. Details are as follows:

##### **3.2.1 Self-Efficacy Questionnaire**

The self-efficacy questionnaire used in this study is the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) developed by Schwarzer *et al.* (1997). Originally containing 20 items, it has been optimized to 10 items and translated into at least 25 languages, gaining widespread international application. The questionnaire adopts a 4-point Likert scoring system, with 1 indicating "completely incorrect," 2 indicating "slightly correct," 3 indicating "basically correct," and 4 indicating "completely correct." Higher scores indicate stronger self-efficacy. Previous studies (e.g., Wang Caikang *et al.*) have shown that the correlation coefficients between each item and the total score of the GSES are all above 0.60. Chi Liping and Xin Ziqiang found that Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient was 0.86, the split-half

reliability was 0.85, and the test-retest reliability after four weeks was 0.81, all indicating that the scale is a reliable measurement tool.

### 3.2.2 Learning Motivation Questionnaire

The learning motivation questionnaire used in this study is the Learning Motivation Scale developed by Amabile *et al.* (1994). This scale contains 30 items, divided into two subscales: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation covers the dimensions of challenge and enjoyment, while extrinsic motivation covers the dimensions of obtaining rewards and recognition from others. The construction of this scale is significant for understanding the relationship and mechanism between motivation orientation and academic performance, creativity, and other variables. The questionnaire also adopts a 4-point Likert scoring method, with options ranging from "completely disagree" (1 point) to "completely agree" (4 points). Higher scores indicate stronger learning motivation. The scale, tested with a sample of 1,323 students from two universities in northeastern the United States, yielded Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficients of 0.79 for the intrinsic motivation subscale and 0.78 for the extrinsic motivation subscale, with test-retest reliabilities of 0.79 and 0.84 one year later. Its construct validity and predictive validity are both ideal, making it an effective and reliable tool for distinguishing and measuring intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Chi Liping and Xin Ziqiang's research on Chinese samples also validated the scale's multiple reliability and validity indicators.

### 3.2.3 Self-Regulated Learning Ability in English Questionnaire

The self-regulated learning ability in English questionnaire used in this study is the Self-Regulated Learning Ability Questionnaire developed by Deregözü (2014). This questionnaire, which was administered to a randomly sampled group of 166 students (43 males, accounting for 25.9%; 123 females, accounting for 74.1%) from a university in western Turkey during the 2013-2014 academic year, identified a three-factor structure consisting of "planning ability," "execution ability," and "evaluation ability" through exploratory factor analysis. Items are scored using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always), with higher scores indicating higher levels of self-regulated learning ability. The factor loadings of this questionnaire are all above 0.30, and the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient is 0.78, indicating high reliability. Therefore, this questionnaire is a suitable tool for assessing learners' autonomous abilities during the self-regulated learning process.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis revealed significant positive correlations between self-efficacy and learning motivation ( $r=0.837$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), self-efficacy and autonomous English learning ability ( $r=0.794$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), and learning motivation and autonomous English learning ability ( $r=0.852$ ,  $p<0.01$ ).

## 4.2 Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Analysis

The SEM analysis indicated that self-efficacy had a significant positive predictive effect on learning motivation ( $\beta=0.817$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and also a significant positive predictive effect on autonomous English learning ability ( $\beta=0.699$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Furthermore, learning motivation mediated the relationship between self-efficacy and autonomous English learning ability.

## 4.3 Mediation Effect Analysis

The mediation effect analysis demonstrated that the mediation effect of learning motivation between self-efficacy and autonomous English learning ability was significant (indirect effect = 0.340, 95% CI = [0.284, 0.595]).

## 5. Conclusions and Suggestions

### 5.1 Conclusions

This study finds that self-efficacy has a significant positive impact on self-regulated learning ability in English (An *et al.*, 2021), while learning motivation mediates between self-efficacy and self-regulated learning ability in English (Tosuncuoglu, 2019). This finding validates the applicability of social cognitive theory in the field of English language learning and provides a theoretical basis for enhancing the self-regulated learning ability of university students majoring in English.

### 5.2 Suggestions

Based on the conclusions of this study, we propose the following suggestions to optimize the cultivation of self-regulated learning ability among university students majoring in English:

- Educators should attach great importance to students' learning experiences and effectively enhance their self-efficacy by designing productive learning activities, providing positive feedback, and encouraging students to accumulate successful experiences. This will help students build self-confidence and face learning challenges bravely, thereby laying a solid foundation for the improvement of their self-regulated learning ability.
- Teachers should adopt diversified teaching methods and tools, such as setting challenging learning tasks, conducting group cooperative learning, and utilizing modern educational technology tools to stimulate students' learning interest and intrinsic motivation. By creating a positive learning atmosphere, students can be more actively engaged in English learning, further enhancing their self-regulated learning ability.
- Educators should guide students to set clear learning goals and plans and cultivate their learning strategies and resource utilization abilities. By teaching effective learning methods and techniques, educators can help students better plan and manage their learning process, thereby improving their self-regulated learning

efficiency and effectiveness. These measures will contribute to the self-driven and sustained development of university students majoring in English during their English learning process.

## 6. Research Limitations

Despite the contributions of this study, several limitations should be acknowledged. Firstly, the sample size, while representative of the target population, may not be sufficient to generalize the findings to all English majors in different educational contexts. Secondly, the study's cross-sectional design limits the ability to draw causal inferences between the variables. Longitudinal studies are needed to understand better the dynamic relationships and developmental trajectories of self-efficacy, learning motivation, and self-regulated learning ability. Furthermore, the use of self-report measures, while common in psychological research, may be subject to biases such as social desirability or response sets, which could affect the accuracy and reliability of the findings. Addressing these limitations in future research will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the academic success and well-being of English majors.

## Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

## About the Author(s)

Qiao Jing is currently a doctoral student at Dhurakij Pundit University in Bangkok, Thailand. Her academic background and research interests center on the fields of education and ideological and political education. She is actively engaged in cross-disciplinary academic discussions and is dedicated to exploring educational reform and student development in diverse cultural contexts.

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