

# The Correlation Between Iraqi EFL Preparatory School Students' Self-Regulation and Academic Engagement

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## ABSTRACT

*This study tries to find out the relationship between self-regulation and academic engagement of Iraqi EFL students. The sample consists of preparatory school female and male students. It is a descriptive study. The instruments used to collect the data are questionnaires of English learning self-regulation and academic engagement. After statistical procedures, The result shows that self- regulation and academic - engagement for preparatory students is low. This proves a correlation between the two variables. Strong correlation is only for females than males.*

**Keywords:** *Self – regulation, Engagement, Correlation.*

## INTRODUCTION

### The Problem of the Study and its Significance

Self – regulation is considered one of the basic factors which has an essential role in learning the English language. It is known as the way individuals' internal social values and extrinsic contingencies and progressively turn them into personal values and self – motivations (Ryan and Deci, 2000 : 55).

Academic engagement is another important factor, It is being involved in school tasks. It has both behavioral and emotional components. Learners who are engaged show continuous behavioral connection. They focus on the task at hand, display enthusiasm and interest, and also show positive affect and a high degree of effort. In other words, it shows emotional involvement (Wilson, 1987:21).

Iraqi EFL students lack self-reliance in identifying the problem and finding solutions to it, as

well as in making decisions in learning. Therefore their role in the actual participation in the performance of activities is passive. In other words, the students in considered the recipient of the information (Abed, 2019 : 3)

Another Source of problem is the fact that many Iraqi EFL teachers do not provide opportunities for their students to participate on the part of their faith, they are only responsible for how effectively their class learns (sole-decision-makers). The teacher's procedures and instructions are restricted within the curriculum, far from the practices that motivate and engage students to provoke the mental processes. (Marzouk, 2013 : 260)

For several decades, scholars and researchers have recognized that self – regulation and academic engagement are correlated with students' learning process and succeeding in the English language in class.

Therefore, the current study may attempt to find this relationship and activate students' challenging, understanding and retaining English language skills.

### **Aim of the Study**

This study aims at finding out :

- 1- Students' self – regulation level.
- 2- Students' academic engagement level.
- 3- The correlation between students' self – regulation and their academic engagement.
- 4- The significance of the statistical differences in the correlation between self-regulation and academic engagement according to the sex variable.

### **The Limitations of the study**

This study is limited to :

Iraqi EFL preparatory schools (females and males) students in Baghdad governorate during the academic year 2021-2022.

### **Value of the Study**

It is hoped that this study may be found usefully by Iraqi EFL preparatory school abilities by themselves who are interested in building up their engagement and learning English language to be more autonomous through focusing on the relationship between students' self – focusing regulation and their academic engagement.

### **Plan of the Study**

- 1- Chapter one : Introduction (the Problem of the Study and its Significance).
- 2- Chapter Two : Theoretical Background and Related Previous Studies.
- 3- Chapter Three : Methodology and Procedures (Descriptive Study)

4- Chapter Four : Data Analysis, Results, Conclusion , Recommendation.

### **Definition of Basic Terms**

Below are definitions of the basic terms in this study:

### **Self Regulation :**

Self regulation is the ability to monitor attention, emotion and thoughts. This means, students who have the ability to regulate their emotions and behavior are able to better engage with other students and respond to the varying activities in authentic contexts (Perry, 2000 :533).

### **Academic Engagement**

Academic engagement is an indicator that incorporates academic identification (getting along with teachers , having an interest in the subject matter) and academic participation (which captures the pupils' work effort both inside and outside of class) (Coleman,2012:92).

## **MATERIAL AND METHOD**

### **Preliminary Notes**

This chapter deals with the theoretical background which sheds light on the academic engagement and self – regulation of the learner. It ends with an overview of previous studies that are related to this study.

### **Academic Engagement:-**

Engagement has been used a wide domain of terms by scholars to define engagement, including: student engagement; school engagement; student engagement in class or in schoolwork; academic engagement, and engagement in learning process (Fredricks and McColskey, 2012: 779)

Student engagement is one of the constructs that is used to the behavior of the learners towards the learning process. Also, it refers to a meaningful engagement throughout the environment of learning as the relationship between the student and the school,

teachers, peers, instruction and curriculum (Urquijo and Extremera, 2007:553).

According to Devito (2016:75), this term has its historic roots in a body of work concerned with learner involvement. It has three dimensions which are related with learner s themselves:

Behavioral engagement, denotes a student's participation in academic and extracurricular activities.

Emotional engagement refers to a student's positive and negative reaction to peers, teachers and school.

Cognitive engagement talks about a student's thoughtfulness and willingness to master difficult skills.

**Academic engagement will be classified into four categories :**

#### ***Academic Attitudes***

This category determines how students feel about their educational experiences (Chiu et al. 2012: 1499). According to Blumenfeld et al. (2006 : 122) , attitudes about school , such as pride in success , values of learning , and personal ability play a vital role in an academic achievement.

#### ***Cognitive Engagement***

This is related to a student's psychological investment in their learning (Chiu et al 2012: 1410) . In other hand, this category combines students' willingness to put effort into their learning which using needed cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies that enhance understanding of the subject matter (Lawrence – Lightfoot , 1996 : 87)

#### ***Behavioral Engagement***

It focuses on a student's efforts to perform academic tasks and their level of participation , however, behavioral engagement is a basic component of academic engagement (Chiu et al.,2012:1412). Behaviorally engaged students are those who are have

good attendance, behave suitably and pay attention in class, do their best on their class and homework assignments (Suárez – Orozco and Martin, 2009 : 30)

#### ***Relational Engagement***

It is the degree to which students feel associated with their peers, teachers, and others in their school environment. In school setting, positive and meaningful relationships are a substantial academic component for students as these connections supply a sense of emotional support, belonging, role modeling, and positive feedback (Lawrence–Lightfoot and Hofman, 1997 :89)

These four categories of academic engagement are associated together into student and teacher interviews to holistically estimate student's academic engagement (Sáez – Orozco and Martin , 2009 : 32 ).

#### ***Academic Engagement in Student Engagement Theoretical Framework***

Tinto (1993 : 123) states that academic institutions have lately been an area for function with regard to learner's development, learner's experience and the invention and participation of knowledge should still stay the primary focus.

As mentioned by Pascarella and Terenzini (2005: 98) , the core function of institutions (schools, colleges and universities) are educational, and learner learning should continue to be the central spot. Academic activities and interaction as basic supporting factors enabling, interceding, and enhancing learning process have prolonged come to the foreground of educational advancement and have been mostly examined within the student engagement framework.

#### ***Self – Regulation***

Self – regulation constructs and labels emerged between 1980 and 2000 in educational , organizational, clinical and health psychological journals (Zeidner et al., 2000:752). In addition, self-management refers to it. It is possible for a learner to be independent, by himself or herself, to face the difficulties in English learning (self- regulated learners) (Miller, 2002:321).

Self – regulated process refers to regulating affective, cognitive and behavioral processes in a successful manner (Micheal, 2005:20).

Also, it is related positively to success in higher education, such as better grades and less academic delay. Thus, to prepare individuals for life learning, and to stimulate academic success, higher education should promote their learners to develop self-regulation (Zeider et al., 2000:760).

### THE PHASES OF SELF-REGULATION

Zimmerman (2002:65) talks about three cyclical phases in self-regulation which are :

1- The forethought phase: It is related to ways of doing and beliefs before undertaking a task. It includes task analysis (goal setting and strategic planning) and / or self-motivation process (self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations). This phase was planned (Pintrich,1999:459). It is as pre-action affects play an important role in learning situation conditioning learning (Schmitz and Wiese, 2006:64).

2- The performance phase : Is when implantation happens, and strategies of learning are put into action. Learners need self-control and self-observation, applying the methods and strategies selected during the forethought phase (imagery, self-instruction, attention focusing and task strategies (Zimmerman,2002:66). Resource management strategies are used in this phase (Schmitz and Wiese, 2006 :65).

3- The self-reflection phase : It occurs after each learning act. It is in the self-reflection phase when self-judgment and evaluation procedures happen. There are two major classes of self-regulation : self-judgment and self-reaction. Self-evaluation is one form – judgment , and it is about comparing one’s performance against one’s prior performance (Zimmerman 2002:68). Pintrich (1999:461) refers to self-evaluation as monitoring, and to adaptive self-reaction responses as regulating.

### PRACTICES OF STUDENT’S SELF-REGULATION

Student’s self-regulation practices is depended on learner’s ability to apply motivational, metacognitive, and behavioral skills to the process of learning to obtain desirable and convincing results (Zimmerman, 1989: 335)

Metacognitive component have been shown is more focal to positive learners’ experiences in the process of learning in order to activate their prior knowledge effectively to knowing how to perform certain tasks perfectly in a real-life situation (Perry, 2000 : 562)

Cho and Cho (2017: 79) view positive relationship between self-regulation learner - content interaction and the experience of learning process.

In other words, the learner is the main focus for implementing his/her own plan to achieve learning goals through his/her ability to complete course activities communicatively (Learner - instructor).

### PREVIOUS STUDIES

It is necessary to review the most related studies to the present study to know something about the literature or which the study rests and justify the procedures followed and interpret the results obtained

#### Popa (2015)

This study is conducted in Romania, the research is done in order to make students directly responsible and accountable for their performance adjusting to the rapidly changing school environment. A key element in trying to be a successful student is the competence of self – regulation.

The sample of the study includes (270) secondary school students. The instruments used are the Academic Self- Regulation Questionnaire and Motivational Strategies Questionnaire. It is concluded that the competence of self – regulated learning has a strong impact on the level of attainment achieved by students, enhancing the relationship between motivation and performance.

**Armando (2019)**

This research determines the extent of student engagement at Partido State University (Philippines) and analyzes the factors affecting student engagement . Moreover , it investigates the correlation between student engagement and academic performance . The study uses a descriptive correlational method (using questionnaires to gather data) . Three hundred and five students from the College of Education is the sample of the study.

The result is found out that behavioral , emotional and cognitive engagements are positively correlated to the academic performance of the students. The teacher, the school, and the parents should have strong collaboration to create more opportunities for students to maximize their university engagement.

**DISCUSSION OF THE PREVIOUS STUDIES**

A discussion of the previous studies is presented in the light of the sample, aims, experimental design, and results of the studies.

The samples of the previous studies are drawn from different populations. They are secondary school students in Popa's study, and university students in Armando's study.

Concerning the aims, the present study is identical to that of Popa and Armando, all of them focus on the correlational method (descriptive study).

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION****Methodology and Procedures****Preliminary Note**

This chapter is allotted to the description of the population and sample of the study, the selection and development of the measurement tools used , and it also includes the attainment of the validity and reliability of the instruments of the study and description of the statistical used.

**Population and Sample Selection**

The population consists of students at the preparatory school in the city of Baghdad during the academic year 2021-2022.

**Table 3.1: Distribution of the Population**

Name of directorate

No. of students

Al- karkh 1/2/3

200

Al-Rusafah 1/2/3

200

Total

400

The subjects of the sample have been chosen intentionally from the population. The sample consists of (200) males and (200) females.

**The Instruments of the Study**

To achieve the aims of the study, two questionnaires have been applied to the sample mentioned above.

**Description of Instruments**

In order to collect quantitative data, a self-regulation questionnaire has been applied to determine the self – regulation level of participants which consists of (30) items, (21) items are positive and (9) items are negative (Hair 1998). A second questionnaire has been applied to measure students' academic engagement of (30) items, (27) items are positive and (3) items are negative (Abdul Sukor et al.2014:10-20).

### **Research Design**

In this study , a descriptive design was adapted in the form of a questionnaire and under the non – experimental research design, correlational research (quantitative methods) . Correlational study describes the degree to which two or more quantitative variables are related (Ortega, 2013 : 120).

### **Face Validity of the Instrument**

According to Richards and Renandya (2002 : 396), face validity is “the degree to which a test (instrument) measures what is supposed to measure, or can be used successfully for intended purpose .

To ensure face validity , the questionnaires have been exposed to a jury , specialists in TEFL and applied linguistics to decide whether the items of the instruments have been valid and suitable to the students or not .

Cronbach formula. Two hundred students are taken to be reliability samples. The reliability coefficient has been found out to be (0.939).

### **Pilot Administration**

According to the pilot administration , no ambiguous items are noticed. It has also been found that students need (50) minutes to respond to each questionnaire.

### **Item Analysis**

According to Brown (1996 : 50) , item analysis is a means of evaluating the effectiveness of test items; it permits the identification of the items which are difficult or too easy (difficulty power) . To achieve this procedure, a sample of (200) students (statistical analysis sample) After using the T-test for two independent sample to calculate the discriminating power of items (self – regulation and academic engagement) , an upper group consisting of (54) students and a lower group consisting of (54) students

### **CONCLUSIONS**

- 1- The level of self-regulation and academic engagement of Iraqi EFL predatory school students is low.
- 2- There is a correlation between self-regulation and academic engagement of students.
- 3- Correlation between the two variables is better for females.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

After analyzing the questionnaires results and the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations have been arrived at :

More attention can be paid to awareness – development activities in the programme of instruction in order to enhance and develop students’ autonomy.

Students should be involved in group-work activities to develop their interaction with each other to get self-confidence.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES**

The following studies can be suggested for further work:

The correlation between self-regulation and intrinsic motivation in Iraqi EFL college students.

The correlation between academic engagement and anxiety in Iraq EFL preparatory students.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ)**

#### **No. Items**

1. I am losing my desire to learn English.
2. I know how well I am doing in my English classes.
3. If a learning technique does not help me learn English, I try using a new technique.
4. I make sure that I am physically comfortable when I work on English assignments.
5. I do NOT use special learning techniques to help me learn English
6. I love learning English.
7. I know what I do well when it comes to learning English
8. I know only a few different learning techniques I can use to help me improve my English.
9. Electronics and people frequently distract me when I do my English assignments.
10. I know which English assignments will take the most time to complete
11. I do NOT ask other people to help me learn English.
12. I look for ways to use my time effectively when learning English.
13. I want to learn everything I can about the English language.
14. I know that there are many people who can help me with my English.
15. When other people help me with my English, I am grateful.
16. I try to pay attention to my scores on my English assignment
17. I do NOT give myself enough time to do my English homework.



18. After I complete an English assignment or test, I do NOT think about it again.
19. I know that there are special techniques I can use to help me learn English.
20. I make sure that I am emotionally comfortable when I work on my English assignments.
21. I take time each day to make a plan for completing my English language assignments.
22. When I am studying English, I know that the physical learning environment is important,
23. When I need help with my English, I ask other people for help.
24. I am highly motivated to learn English.
25. I know where to find people who can help me understand English principles.
26. I use my time well when I have to complete English assignments.
27. I do NOT know what I need to do to improve my English.
28. I avoid distractions when I do my English assignments.
29. I think learning English is boring.
30. I use special learning techniques to help me learn English.

## **Appendix B**

### **Questionnaire (AEQ)**

#### **Academic Engagement**

##### **No. I Items**

1. I always give an opinion in class.
2. I have presented the assignment in front of a class.
3. I always follow the teachers instructions and do all the homework.
4. I always give my full attention to get the job done.
5. I was able to learn and complete the work assigned
6. I go to class without being completing
7. I always cooperated with other students to complete tasks assigned 8. I, along with other students, do our homework after school hours. 9. I take immediate actions when a task is assigned.

10. If I have a problem , I'll try to solve it.
11. I do not easily feel disappointed when difficulties occur at the early phase of my work.
12. I'll try to get help from people when I'm in trouble.
13. I enjoy doing work that is challenging.
14. I am committed to completing tasks even if no points are awarded.
15. I work with high concentration.
16. I like to ask questions to gain knowledge.
17. I am used to being independent.
18. I like to do tasks where students are allowed to choose the topic rather than those not allowed.
19. I like to learn new things and be involved in meaningful learning even without a teacher.
20. I will try to avoid the difficult work.
21. I continue learning even if all tasks have been completed.
22. I used to work without supervision.
23. I always completed the task within the stipulated time by the teacher.
24. I am not satisfied with my homework due to the lack of understanding and not because I'm not working on it.
25. I completed my work with the intention of obtaining good results. 26. I studied with the aim to have more knowledge in all subjects.
27. My interest in a course will increase if I perform well in the course. 28. I can improve my performance in a course.
29. I would be happy if I could finish the challenging chore .
30. I will study hard if my ability is recognized by lecturers.