

THE PROCESS OF A COURSE DESIGN FOR A SELF-REGULATED LEARNING BASED ENGLISH COURSE FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

© Neşe SOYSAL
(Atılım University, Ankara, Turkey)

nesesoysal@yahoo.com

This study aims at designing an English course based on the explicit presentation of self-regulated learning strategies to the first year university students whose medium of instruction is English to make them responsible for their own learning. First, a literature review was completed to explain self-regulated learning in details and present the studies in that area. Then, a needs assessment was conducted and the results were analyzed. Accordingly, the intended learning outcomes were decided and general teaching strategies were chosen. After deciding on the evaluation of both the students and the model, one of the units was chosen to be implemented. In that way, the strengths and weaknesses of the design could be observed. For piloting, the unit that is an introduction to the self-regulated learning strategies was chosen.

In this unit, the strategies were introduced explicitly with some activities. In that way, the students' reactions to the strategies and their level of using these strategies were observed. Finally, although it was recommended to develop self regulated learning strategies implicitly in some sources, it was concluded that by the help of presenting the self-regulated learning strategies explicitly to the university students, they also became responsible for their own learning. as they become conscious about their own needs.

Keywords: self-regulated learning, learning strategies,
curriculum design

With the help of the innovations and developments of our century, there is so much information to be learned that people are in need of lifelong learning. For that reason, there is the necessity of reaching the knowledge everywhere and learning them in any time. People are required to determine their own ways of learning suitable to their life styles. Especially university students are expected to have the responsibility of their own learning. They are considered as the ones who can determine what to learn and how to learn. They should have the skills of reaching the required knowledge and learning it by themselves. For that reason, university students should be informed about self regulated learning strategies.

On the other hand, university students are expected to express themselves on a topic, describe a project, summarize information, compare and contrast topics or issues, write term papers or research papers. In these situations, they need to adopt a standard format and style of speaking and writing. That is, they are required to express themselves clearly and accurately. However,

there are some students that do not like speaking and writing courses and they find these skills difficult. For that reason, especially at the universities whose medium of instruction is English, students need to know how to express their ideas and know the steps of writing clearly in order to speak and write eagerly and easily. Moreover, as these skills are productive skills, they need some input to produce. For that reason, reading and listening skills should also be developed to provide input to the students to be helpful in their productive skills in an integrative way.

On the other hand, this course is designed by taking the societal needs into consideration. Due to globalization, all the countries in the world are in communication with each other and they work together. For that reason, they need a common language and it looks like English nowadays. Therefore, the companies and the employers in our country want to employ people who are proficient in English. Thus, this course will provide basic necessary requirements for the students in applying for and working in a job in the future. However, it should be noticed that this course is the first course in English curriculum to provide these necessities. There will be the other courses following it in the next semesters for these needs.

This course mainly aims to improve the students' overall proficiency in the English language, which will enable them to follow their departmental courses with ease. Therefore, it aims to equip the students with lexical and grammatical knowledge, reading and listening skills to understand their course books and lectures in their departments and writing and speaking skills to express themselves. In addition, during the course, the students' self-regulated learning skills will be developed explicitly which are crucial throughout their academic lives.

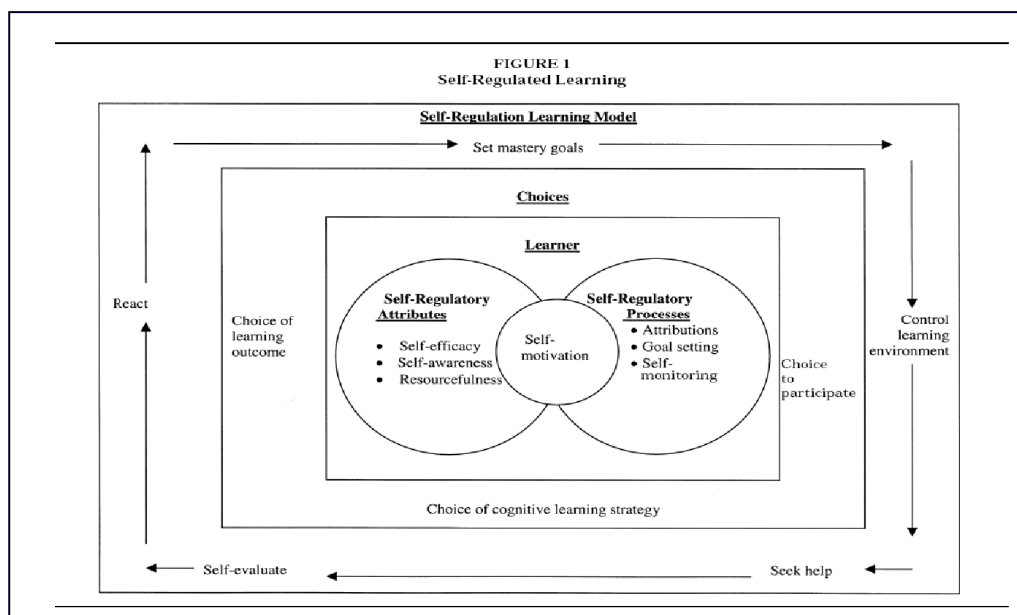
Review of literature

In an information age, the students are in the need of following the increasing knowledge in every field. For that reason, they should all the time be ready for learning. However, it is not possible to acquire all the knowledge in schools by the help of teachers. They are responsible for their own acquisition of knowledge and skills. This also means organizing their own learning such as deciding on what to learn and how to learn. This concept brings the issue of self-regulated learning. Self-regulated learning is "a process in which the learner exercises control over his or her thinking, effect and behaviour as knowledge and skills are acquired" (Zimmerman, 1986).

Self-regulated learners are responsible for their own learning; they set academic learning goals and by "planning, organizing, self-monitoring and self-evaluating" their learning process, they try to archive their goals (Zimmerman & Schunk, 1989).

Figure 1 (below) represents the key components of self-regulated learning. According to the self-regulated learning model the learner first sets learning goals. In order to achieve these goals, the learner controls the learning environment to eliminate the distracters. Also, the learner seeks help from the others when he needs. Later, the learner self-evaluates himself to see his progress.

At the center of this model is the learner's self-motivation. Self-regulatory attributes are constructs that include self-efficacy, self-awareness, and resourcefulness. Self-regulatory processes include attributions, goals, and self-monitoring.

Figure 1. *Self-regulated learning model*

Source: Smith, 2001:6

Moreover, as it was cited in Areglado, Bradley and Lane's studies (1996) "students are self-directed to the degree that they actively participate in their own learning processes-metacognitively, motivationally, and behaviourally" (Zimmerman, 1998:6).

According to Areglado et al. self-regulated learning has these characteristics (1996:7):

- 1) There is observable *evidence* that students are more responsible for their own learning experiences.
- 2) There is a *reality principle* making learning more useful and related to real experiences.
- 3) There is a *respect for natural thinking* in making the students construct their own knowledge and develop their ideas.
- 4) There are facts, thoughts, and intellectual values as the *three majors of teaching*.
- 5) *Perceptual guidelines* are presented to control anger-associated behaviour.
- 6) There are *key processes* in order to make students direct their acquisition of knowledge.

On the other hand, the teachers of the self-regulated learners also should have some characteristics. Self-directed teachers should (Areglado et al., 1996:25):

- 1) be more able to listen to students, especially to words that depict the learner's feelings,
- 2) be able to better accept students' innovative, challenging, "troublesome," creative ideas, rather than reacting to these threats by insisting on conformity,
- 3) tend to pay as much attention to the relationship with students as to the content of the course,
- 4) be more likely to work out interpersonal frictions and problems with students, rather than deal with such issues in a disciplinary or punitive manner,

- 5) develop a more egalitarian atmosphere in the classroom, conducive to spontaneity, creative thinking, and to self-directed work.

They also call teachers as the facilitators and list some principles that facilitators should know. They say that students need intellectual standards in order to direct their own thinking process. Self-directed learners set goals, self-monitor and self-evaluate. Also, student thinking is more important than the curriculum itself. Instead of trying to cover the curriculum on time, teachers as the facilitators should spend more time on student thinking in depth. Moreover, teachers should direct students to acquire the value systems that will help them to adjust in social settings. Also, as teachers cannot prove the students with knowledge, the students themselves acquire the knowledge; facilitators should check how the students use the information they gained.

Costa and Kallick (2004), describe a self-regulated learner as being self-managing, self-monitoring and self-modifying. A self-managing learner knows the importance of a task and makes strategic planning for the outcomes. A self-monitoring learner knows what works in his plan, and a self-modifying learner evaluates and constructs meaning from his experiences and applies his learning to future activities.

They describe the self-directed learners as people who “set goals that are appropriate and attainable... [and]... feel responsible for the work that is to be accomplished. They know the criteria for quality work and know that they are accountable to those criteria. They learn to modify their work based on feedback and self-knowledge” (Costa & Kallick, 2004:35).

When the literature is reviewed, it can be seen that there are a lot of studies conducted on self-regulated learning. According to Zimmerman (1989), self-regulated learning focuses on the explanation of “how students become masters of their own learning processes”. In his study, he examines the cycle phases of self-regulated learning, compared skilful and naïve self-regulated learners, and analyzes the development of academic self-regulation.

First, he describes academic self-regulation as “self-directive process” rather than mental skills emphasizing the learners’ “transforming their mental skills into academic skills” (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1998:2). For that reason he presents a cyclical phase of self-regulation. There are three major phases in this cycle:

- 1) Forethought: In this phase, learners put efforts to learn and set the stage for their own learning. The processes of this phase are *goal setting* meaning the selection of learning outcomes (Locke & Latham, 1990), *strategic planning* meaning learning strategies for the goals (Zimmerman & Bandura & Martinez-Pons, 1992) and self-efficacy including personal beliefs on learning capacity (Bandura, 1986).
- 2) Performance: In this phase, learners focus on the task and provide their concentration and efforts on it. This phase includes *attention focusing*, *self-instruction* and *self-monitoring* of the learners about the task they want to learn.
- 3) Self-reflection: This phase involves learners’ reaction to their learning efforts. The learners evaluate how well they are doing. This phase involves the processes of *self-evaluation*, *attributions*, *self-reactions* and *adaptivity*. Self-reflections again affect forethought in turn.

Next, Schunk and Zimmerman (1998) compare skilful self-regulated learners with the naïve ones. According to them, naïve self-regulated learners have nonspecific goals and low self-efficacy in forethought phase. They are unable to focus their plans and they have self-handicapping strategies in performance phase. In self-reflection phase, they avoid self-evaluation and they have negative self-reactions.

On the other hand, skilful self-regulators have specific hierarchical goals and high self-efficacy. Also, they are intrinsically motivated compared to naïve self-regulated learners. In the phase of performance, they can easily focus on their performance and they are good at in self instruction and self-monitoring. As for the self-reflection phase, they seek self-evaluation and they have positive self-reactions. For that reason, the students should be encouraged to be skilful self-regulated learners.

Later, they question the conditions that make students to become skilful rather than naïve self-regulators. They think there are two vital sources of self regulation as social and self-directed experiences. Social sources are adults such as parents and teachers; and peers such as friends and classmates. These sources sometimes become a model or provide feedback to the learners; or they provide guidance or help for cooperative learning.

On the other hand, Schunk and Zimmerman (1998) focus on the importance of personal choice. They say that to become “fully self-regulated”, learners need to control their own learning. Even with homework, they should have the sense of choice such as in scheduling, organizing or completing.

In their studies, Graham, Harris and Troia (1998) focus on self-regulation strategies for writing. They think that writing performances of the learners can be enhanced by teaching them self-regulated writing strategies explicitly. For that reason, they developed Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) model to provide higher level of cognitive processes and develop autonomous learners. The model has six instructional stages including the teaching of both self-regulatory processes such as goal setting, self-instruction and self-evaluation; and writing processes. The stages are called as Develop Background Knowledge, Discuss It, Model It, Memorize It, Support It and Independent Performance. They also, provide some cases as examples and conclude their study emphasizing the explicit teaching of self-regulation especially in writing.

Hofer, Yu and Pintrich (1998) studied the teaching of self-regulated learning strategies to the college students. In their studies, they present a curriculum design used in Learning to Learn course at the university level. They mainly discuss on the integrated or adjunct design of self-regulated learning strategies. They think that at the primary or secondary level, it is easy to teach self-regulated learning strategies in an integrated manner. However, at college level, as the students need discipline-specific content and the class hours are limited compared with secondary schools, there is a need to teach them adjunctly. For that reason, in their studies, they preferred the use of an adjunct course format. In addition, they emphasize the importance of the issue of transfer for the college students and they warn the designers about considering the age level of the students in designing the courses.

Research carried out by Lan (1998) describes a self-monitoring instructional model emphasizing the impact of self-regulatory learning strategies in a statistics course at Texas Tech University. In the model, he first provided the students with the instructional goals. Then, the students were asked to record duration of their learning activities for each goal. Also, they were asked to rate their self efficacy in attaining each goal. Then, they

were provided with feedback about their self-monitoring experiences to enhance their motivation for the goals. At the end of the study he gives educational applications of the study. He suggests that students' learning strategies can be enhanced by the help of self-monitoring. He also adds that instructors may implement instruction on self-regulatory learning strategies.

In another study, Winne and Stockly (1998) studied computing technologies for the development of self-regulated learning. They describe STUDY instructional tool to recognize the effects of computerized environment in developing self-regulated learning. In their study, first they give detailed information on self-regulated learning. Then, they give information about the STUDY software. It provides learners with the necessary support on variety of topics. It also offers activities to make the students set specific goals for themselves, decide on strategies to reach those goals and self-monitor their efforts in achieving those goals. Finally, with the help of the notes of the students, they conclude their studies by focusing on the power of computing technologies in providing self-regulated learning.

Belfiore and Hornyak (1998) studied the purposeful model of self-regulatory learning with adolescent students who are at risk for academic failure. They focused on the importance of self-monitoring and self-reinforcement in their purposeful learning approach. In this approach, discriminating the target behaviour was taught to learners and then, they were asked to record its frequency. Also, self-instruction and self-reinforcement were taught to learners, too. As a result, it was found out that with the help of effective instruction and self-management, academically successful learning environments can be provided.

From these review, it can be concluded that the learners are in need of self-regulated learners to be successful both in their courses and their life experiences. As literature indicates, there are different models for the implication of self-regulated learning strategies and knowing the needs of the learners and the requirements of the subject matter, they can easily be applied in all level of learners. Also, as it is emphasized in the literature, the self-regulated strategies of this design will be implemented explicitly considering the level of the learners.

Needs assessment

In order to design a course, the needs of the learners should be analyzed. Also, Posner and Rudnitsky (2006) recommend taking the needs and the interests of the learners into consideration in a course design. For this reason, a needs assessment questionnaire is prepared and conducted to the students who are attending to this course.

Stufflebeam, McCormick, Brinkerhoff and Nelson (1984) describe needs assessment from the analytic view as a process involving critical thinking about the future problems. It involves "informed judgment, systematic in-depth problem analysis, and the full and complete description of a situation" (Stufflebeam et al., 1984:8). In a needs assessment, necessary things for a purpose are determined. Stufflebeam et al. (1984:16) presents the steps of needs analysis as follows:

- 1) Preparing to do a needs assessment
- 2) Gathering desired needs assessment information
- 3) Analyzing the needs assessment information
- 4) Reporting needs assessment information
- 5) Using and applying needs assessment information

In needs assessment procedure of the design, these steps are followed. In the first step, a needs assessment questionnaire is prepared. In order to prepare the questionnaire, the literature on self-regulated learning is reviewed and the questions are prepared accordingly.

According to the results of needs assessment, it can be said that the students who are taking this course have variety in their learning styles. However, in general it can be said that they like studying with others and they like studying by doing instead of just memorizing. For this reason, the teaching activities are based on group or pair work and hands on activities. On the other hand, as the results show that the students' ability in studying by using internet-based activities are lower, there are some activities encouraging the use of web based learning environments to develop students' learning styles in that way. In addition, as it can be seen from the results, the number of the students who prefer self-regulated studying strategies such as studying in the time, place and manner they liked is higher; this course also focuses on developing these strategies better.

Moreover, as for the self-regulated learning strategies in details, they said that they are not good in self-regulation, rehearsal and effort regulation. Also, they stated that they are good at in the other self-regulated strategies such as planning and seeking information. For that reason, firstly, their level of using these strategies is assessed, and then monitored during the courses and then, the ones they need are developed by the help of the activities.

As for the course objectives, the results showed the students need mostly grammar and speaking activities. Also, they need reading activities especially for developing describing the main of the texts. For this, the development of grammatical structures, speaking and reading are in the objectives. Although they said that they do not need the skills related to the planning process of writing, as it is recommended in literature, in order to write organized paragraphs, they will learn the process of planning.

On the other hand, when the needs of the students who took this course before and are taking the following course now are taken into consideration, their learning strategies are different. They like to study alone and they like memorizing. However, they prefer self-regulated learning strategies, too. For that reason, these results also show that there should be variety in the activities.

Also, as for the importance of the self-regulated learning strategies, they stated that self-evaluation and rehearsal are not important for this course. These results also indicate that they are in need of practicing especially these skills of self-regulated learning strategies. For that reason, the objectives of the course focus especially on developing these skills.

For the objectives of the course, the students stated that they need to develop their listening comprehension, vocabulary and sentence structure. The objectives related to outlining and paragraph writing is in lower importance. However, in order to be successful in their academic life, they need to develop their planning and writing strategies. For that reason, all these skills are developed in this course.

To sum up, the reading, listening, and speaking skills of English are included in addition to teaching self-regulated learning strategies in the objectives of the course. Also, as teachers are desired, all the skills are included in an integrated way in the course. In addition, as both the students and the teachers liked, portfolio assessment is a part of student evaluation and the number of the quizzes is increased.

Curriculum design

Self-regulated learning is fundamental to lifelong learning and is a process in which the learner exercises control over his or her thinking, effect and behaviour as knowledge and skills are acquired (Zimmerman, 1986). For that reason, in the design, learning is considered as lifelong learning and also as a process focusing on the self efficacy of the learners on their learning process. In addition, learners are expected to be responsible for their own learning process.

As a result, it was found out that the model should be flexible enough to answer to the varied needs of the students and the teachers. For that reason, as the needs of the learners and the learning process should be the main focus of the design, assessment of the learners should not be the main aim. On the other hand, the learning and teaching strategies should be placed at the center of the design.

According to Posner and Rudnitsky (2006:164), instruction “is made up of all the teacher’s purposeful activities aimed at producing, stimulating, or facilitating learning by students” and it deals with “how and what environments, methods, materials, strategies, tasks, and incentives can be employed to encourage learning”. For that reason, instructional planning is the task of teachers and it sets the stage for learning.

Also, teachers should try to design instructional tasks, activities and environments that will engage learners in the appropriate kinds of processing, thinking, or mental ability. They believe that “what you want your students to learn provide a sort of compass that can guide you in your instructional planning” (Posner & Rudnitsky, 2006:165).

Taking all these into consideration, Posner and Rudnitsky’s model (2006) is helpful in the design of this course. As it is emphasized in the model, first a course rationale is developed taking the needs of the learners into consideration and also paying attention to the needs of the society and the subject matter. In order to determine the needs of the learners and the teachers needs assessment is conducted. Then, in the light of the rationale, educational goals are decided.

Then, intended learning outcomes are determined and categorized in learning related and concept related basis. Later, instructional plan is done by deciding on the content of the course. In this phase, the units are decided, grouped and sequenced. Also, general teaching strategies and instructional foci are chosen.

Posner and Rudnitsky (2006), give importance to effective learning environment. For that reason, they give some guidelines. Also, they discuss some points to consider in creating an optimal environment for learning:

- 1) Goals
- 2) Feedback
- 3) Motivation
- 4) Risk taking
- 5) Learning style
- 6) Prior knowledge

According to these guidelines focused on the model, first students should have a clear idea about what to learn. Also, they should be provided with feedback to help them monitor their own learning progress. In that way, they can be skilled at self-assessment. Moreover, the students should be intrinsically motivated to learning. For that reason, the materials should be made interesting for the students and relevant to their life experiences. Furthermore, a learning environment making students take reasonable risks

should be created to make them learn from their mistakes. In addition, both the teachers and the students should be informed about their learning styles. Also, teachers should design the courses suitable for different learning styles to help students add new strengths to their learning styles. Lastly, teachers should relate the new knowledge to the existing ones.

These points that are made clear in Posner and Rudnitsky's model (2006) are also related to some concepts in self-regulated learning. This is another reason why the designed course is depended on Posner and Rudnitsky's model.

On the other hand, after determining the instructional plan, evaluation is done. In the model both curriculum evaluation and student evaluation is done. As for the student evaluation formative assessment is emphasized rather than summative assessment. Also, authentic methods of assessment such as portfolio are used. In addition, actual learning outcomes are assessed. For the evaluation of the curriculum, information for making course improvement decisions is gathered in each phase and troubleshooting is done to determine the course aspects that need improvement by gathering all the related evidence in each phase and then examining them one by one.

Conclusion

In this design, Posner and Rudnitsky's (2006) model was utilized and self-regulated learning was chosen as an approach guiding the process. First, a literature review was completed to explain self-regulated learning in details and to present the studies in that area. Also, some information was given about web-based learning environments as it was used as a support to self-regulated learning strategies. Then, needs assessment was conducted and the results were analyzed. Accordingly, the intended learning outcomes were decided and general teaching strategies were chosen. After deciding on the evaluation of both the students and the model, one of the units was chosen to be implemented. In that way, the strengths and weaknesses of the design could be observed.

For piloting, the unit that is an introduction to the self-regulated learning strategies was chosen. In this unit, the strategies were introduced explicitly with some activities. In that way, the students' reactions to the strategies and their level of using these strategies were observed.

When the strengths of the design are considered, it can be said that a deep review was conducted on self-regulated learning and the studies done on this area. Also, the topics of the units such as advertising and sports were chosen according to the results of the needs assessment. In that way, it is thought to arouse interest of the students on the units. In addition, the design focuses on the needs and interests of the learners and making them active in their learning process. For that reason, the variety of the activities offered in general teaching strategies can be considered as one of the strengths of the design.

In conclusion, learners need to be self-regulated learners to be successful both in their courses and their life experiences. Also, being conscious about the self-regulated learning strategies make students more aware of their strengths and weaknesses. In addition, knowing the needs of the learners and the requirements of the subject matter, self-regulated learning strategies can easily be applied in all level of learners.

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