

*The Impact of Self-Regulation
Programme on Iraqi EFL University
Students' Motivation*

أثر برنامج تنظيم الذات في دافعية

طلبة الجامعة العراقيةين دارسي اللغة الإنكليزية

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Abstract

The present study is an attempt at designing a self-regulation learning programme in essay writing for Iraqi third year university students at the Departments of English/Colleges of Education. The proposed programme is supposed to help students use cognitive, metacognitive and motivational self-regulation strategies in their writings. It aims at finding out the impact of using self-regulation programme learning on college students' motivation toward writing.

The sample of the present study consists of 50 third year students at the Department of English, College of Education, University of Al-Qadissiyah for the academic year 2013- 2014. The sample is divided into two sections that are randomly selected. One of them is selected to be the experimental group (section c) and the other is the control group (section B). To achieve the aims of the present study, a self-regulation programme in teaching essay has been designed according to Harris and Graham's model of Self-Regulated Strategy Development. An experiment has been conducted. The experimental group has been taught essay writing according to the proposed programme, whereas the control group has been taught according to the conventional ways .At the end of the experiment which has lasted for 12 weeks, a post-test of essay writing has been conducted and post administrations the writing motivation scale have been applied to both groups .

After analyzing the results of the post-test and the post-administration of the scale statistically, it has been revealed that the experimental group subjects' level of motivation toward writing has been found to be higher than that of the control group. Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concludes that the proposed programme plays an effective role increasing students' motivation toward writing. Finally, a number of practical recommendations, pedagogical implications and suggestions for further research are put forward.

الملخص

تعد الدراسة محاولة لتصميم برنامج تعليمي لتنظيم لذات في كتابة مقال لطلاب السنة الثالثة الجامعيين العراقيين في أقسام اللغة الإنجليزية/ كليات التربية. ومن المفترض أن يساعد البرنامج المقترح الطلاب على استخدام استراتيجيات تنظيم الذات المعرفية، وما فوق المعرفية، والتحفيزية في كتاباتهم. وهو يهدف إلى معرفة أثر استخدام برنامج تنظيم الذات على تحفيز طلاب الجامعات نحو الكتابة. تألفت عينة الدراسة الحالية من ٥٠ طالبا في السنة الثالثة في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بكلية التربية جامعة القادسية للعام الدراسي ٢٠١٣-٢٠١٤ م. تم تقسيمهما إلى مجموعتين عشوائيا: احدهما هي المجموعة التجريبية والآخرى هي المجموعة الضابطة. ولتحقيق أهداف هذه الدراسة، تم تصميم برنامج تنظيم الذات في كنية المقالة وفقا لنموذج Harris and Graham للتطور الاستراتيجي لتنظيم الذات. تم تصميم تجربة بمقتضاها درُست المجموعة التجريبية البرنامج المقترح، في حين درست المجموعة الضابطة تبعاً للمنهج الحالي المتبع في تدريس كتابة المقالة. استمرت التجربة اثنا عشر أسبوعاً ، خضعت المجموعتان التجريبية والضابطة في نهايتها إلى اختبار بعدي في كتابة المقالة وتطبيق بعدي لمقياس الدافعية نحو الكتابة. بعد تحليل النتائج إحصائياً تبين إن مستوى دافعية طلبة المجموعة التجريبية نحو الكتابة أعلى من دافعية أقرانهم في المجموعة الضابطة في التطبيق البعدي لمقياس الدافعية نحو الكتابة. وفي ضوء ما تقدم من نتائج، استنتجت الباحثة بأن للبرنامج المقترح دوراً فعالاً في رفع مستوى دافعتهم نحو الكتابة . وأخيراً ، تم تقديم عدد من التوصيات والتطبيقات التعليمية والمقترحات لدراساتٍ أخرى.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Problem and its Significance

Writing is one of the primary cornerstones on which language learning is built. Students use writing to gather and share information, and it provides a useful tool for exploring, organizing, and refining ideas (Graham 2005: 587). To numerous EFL students, writing appears to be challenging. It is frequently accepted as being the last language skill to be acquired for foreign language learners (Hamp and Heasley, 2006:2). Rivers (1981:291) states that in foreign language classes, writing examination papers are disappointing. Many EFL college and university students with many years of study are still unable to express themselves in a clear, correct, and comprehensible manner in writing.

Motivation plays an important role in the development of the students' writing as it is a driving force for them to write in a meaningful way (Hamidun et al., 2012:591). Hedge (1991: 6) admits that, the nature of writing itself is not interesting enough to motivate EFL students to practice regularly. They find themselves in a hide-and-seek game with ideas when doing a writing task since they normally have to write about what is assigned by their teacher rather than about what bears much relevance to them.

The problem of the present study circles around essay writing at English Departments/Colleges of Education at Iraqi Universities. Essay writing in such departments has been receiving little attention and interest. This might be due to the nature of the present syllabus prescribed along with the teaching method that seem to be consistent with the product approach. Consequently, students might lack motivation in writing. Due to this gap between the students' needs and interests on one hand and the prescribed syllabus of essay, a self-regulation learning programme in essay writing has been suggested. Therefore The present

study aims to investigate the impact of a self-regulation learning programme on EFL college students' motivation toward writing.

1.2 Aims of the Study

The present study aims at finding out the impact of using self-regulation learning programme on EFL college students' motivation toward writing.

1.3 Hypotheses

It is hypothesized that there is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group, which is taught according to the proposed self-regulation learning programme and those of the control group, which is taught conventionally in the post-administration of the writing motivation scale.

1.4 Limits of the Study

The present study is limited to:

1. Using self-regulation learning programme in essay writing course.
2. Iraqi EFL third year students/ Colleges of Education during the academic year 2013-2014.
3. The prescribed textbook " Essay and Letter Writing " by L.G. Alexander.

1.5 Value of the Study

1. The present study is expected to be of value for Iraqi EFL college students.
2. Instructors of reading comprehension to teach the essential and appropriate reading comprehension strategies that will help students overcome their difficulties in reading comprehension.
3. Curriculum designers to be aware of such kind of reading strategies.

1.6 Procedures

The following steps are to be followed in order to achieve the aims of the study:

1. Designing a self-regulation writing programme in essay writing.
2. Constructing a writing motivation scale.
3. The suggested programme is to be applied to the sample of the study students (the experimental group) for one semester .
4. At the end of the experiment, the writing motivation scale is applied to both groups.
5. Data collected are analyzed, and suitable statistical methods are used to calculate results.
6. Finding out results and stating conclusions, recommendations and suggestions.

2. Theoretical Background

This section deals with the theoretical background concerning SRL, and motivation.

2.1 Self-Regulated Learning

2.1.1 Definition

SRL, as the three words denote, emphasizes autonomy and control by the individual who monitors, directs, and regulates actions toward goals of information acquisition, expanding expertise, and self-improvement (Paris and Paris, 2001:89).

One of the general working definitions of SRL is that provided by Pintrich (2000:453). who defines SRL as " an active, constructive process whereby learners set goals for their learning and then attempt to monitor, regulate, and control their cognition, motivation, and behaviour, guided and constrained by their goals and contextual features in the environment "

SRL can be viewed as the situation when learners, as masters of their own learning, monitor their academic goals and motivation for themselves, manage human and material resources, and become subjects of decisions and performances in learning process (Chung, 2000: 56).

Zimmerman (2002: 66) defines SRL as the regulation of three general aspects of academic learning: cognition, behaviour and motivation. First, self-regulation (henceforth SR) of cognition involves the control of various cognitive strategies for learning, such as the use of deep processing strategies, planning, monitoring, and regulating. Second, SR of behaviour involves the students' active control of their time, study environment, and their use of others' help.

2.1.2 Components of Self-Regulated Learning

Experts agree that SRL includes three main components: motivation, cognition, and metacognition.

1. Motivation

The motivation component in SRL includes four important subcomponents, consisting of self-efficacy, attributions, and intrinsic motivation and goal orientation (Schraw et al., 2003: 1090).

Self-efficacy can be defined as the judgments of personal capabilities that help learners persist at challenging tasks and execute courses of action required to attain designed types of goals (Zimmerman and Schunk, 2008: 10). Attributions are causal explanations of events that happen in our lives (Bruning et al., 2011: 118). Intrinsic motivation refers to behaviours that are engaged in for their own sake (Vallerand and Bissonnette, 1992: 600). It can strengthen students' willingness to learn in a self-regulated way (Reeve et al., 2008: 234). Goal orientation refers to beliefs about ability and how those beliefs affect learning (Schraw et al., 2003 : 1091).

2. Cognition

The term cognition can be defined as the process of perceiving, attending, thinking, remembering, and knowing. It refers to the learning strategies that students use during actual learning processes to complete an assignment or to accomplish a goal implied by the academic task (Boakaerst, 1996 : 105-106).

3. Metacognition

Metacognition means cognition about cognition or thinking about thinking (Fox, 2005:125). In conceptions of metacognition, a distinction is often made between knowledge of cognition and regulation of cognition: Knowledge of cognition consists of declarative knowledge about the cognitive system, procedural knowledge about how to execute cognitive strategies, and (declarative) conditional knowledge about the utility of strategies. Regulation of cognition typically refers to metacognitive skills for the control over one's strategy use, i.e., planning, monitoring, and evaluation (Veenman,2011:198).

2.1.3 Strategies of Self-Regulated Learning

To promote SRL in classrooms, students can use a variety of strategies. These strategies might fall into four major categories: motivational, cognitive, and metacognitive (Kobayashi and Lockee, 2008:33-35).

1. Motivational Strategies

Motivational strategies refer to those motivational influences that are consciously exerted for achieving and enduring positive effect (Mezei, 2008:83). Two important motivational strategies can be used to develop and maintain SR: goal setting and self-consequencing (Dembo, 2004:10). Goal setting is viewed as an important aspect of SR. It involves deciding on a specific objective and then taking the appropriate action to achieve the desired result (McCarthy,2011:104). Self-consequencing (self-reinforcement) means arranging or imagining rewards or punishments for success or failure on an academic task. It is the process whereby individuals reinforce themselves contingent on their performing a desired response, which increases the likelihood of future responding (Schunk, 2012:405).

2. Cognitive Strategies

Cognitive learning strategies are defined as the special thoughts or behaviours that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information (O'Malley and Chamot , 1990: 1). The basic cognitive strategies are those which enhance memory such as, rehearsal, elaboration tactics, and organizing information (Weinstein and Mayer,1986: 317).

3. Metacognitive Strategies

Metacognitive strategies in SRL generally involve planning, monitoring, and self-evaluation (Ghazi et al.,2013:99).

Teaching students to approach academic tasks with a plan is a viable method for promoting SRL(Pressley and Woloshyn, 1995: 187). Schrawet al. (2003:1090) admit that planning includes goal setting and activating prior knowledge. Zumbrunn et al. (2011: 10) believe that planning and goal setting are thought to be complementary processes, as planning can help learners establish well thought out goals and strategies to be successful.

b. Self-Monitoring

Self-monitoring assume students' ownership for their learning and achievement outcomes. To self-monitor their progress, learners must set their own learning goals, plan ahead, independently motivate themselves to meet their goals, focus their attention on the task at hand, and use learning strategies to facilitate their understanding of material (Ibid.: 12).

c. Self-Evaluation

Self-evaluation is closely related to self-monitoring. It differs from self-monitoring in the use of external comparisons and reinforcers. It requires the person to compare some dimension of his / her behaviour with that of some standard or criteria. The dimension to be evaluated may take the form of (a) accuracy of self-monitoring, (b)

improvement or performance overtime, and (c) the overall performance for one specific session (Mace et al. , 2001: 64).

2.2 Motivation

2.2.1 Definition

The word 'motivation' is derived from the Latin verb 'movere' that means 'to move'. Motivation is then responsible for our movements, our actions and the way we behave (Beck ,2004: 24).

Motivation concerns "the direction and magnitude of human behaviour, that is the choice of a particular action, the persistence with it and the effort expended on it" (Wegge,2002:274). It is, thus, responsible for why people decide to do something, how long they are willing to sustain the activity, how hard they are going to pursue it (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011:4).

In Pintrich and Schunk's view (2002: 4), motivation involves various mental processes that lead to the initiation and maintenance of action. They (ibid.) define it as "the process whereby goal-directed activity is instigated and sustained".

Williams and Burden (1997:120) describe motivation as "a state of cognitive arousal which provokes a decision to act as a result of which there is sustained intellectual and/or physical effort so that the person can achieve some previously set goal". They (ibid.) also draw attention to the fact that the strength of motivation depends largely on the importance of outcome that a person desires to achieve.

2.2.2Types of Motivation

Tsai and Chang(2013:26) name two types of motivation :intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Extrinsic motivation is caused by outside factor which influences a learner, e.g. exams to be passed, a rule or a regulation given by a state, an employer or a school (Harmer, 2007: 98). Intrinsic motivation refers to a type of self-motivation in which

learners do activities that fill them with spontaneous pleasure or enjoyment and do not require any reward beyond this inherent satisfaction (Deci and Ryan, 2002: 64).

2.3 Motivation and self-regulated Learning

Zimmerman and Schunk (2008: 2) indicate that motivation is linked to SR in several ways. Motivation can be a precursor to SR because it can fuel interest in learning and in the use of SR strategies. It can also be a mediator of SR because motivation can increase the likelihood that one would use SR in tasks. In addition, motivation can also be a concomitant of SRL outcomes because students become more interested in academic tasks as their skills improve. Last, motivation can be an outcome of SRL.

Deci and Ryan's theory of self-determination specifies a set of three innate psychological needs that are relevant to sustaining intrinsic motivation, and as such also to developing SR: the need for competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Dix, 2013: 74). The need for competence involves understanding how to attain various external and internal outcomes and being self-efficacious in performing the requisite actions. The need for social relatedness involves developing secure and satisfying connections with others in one's social milieu. The need for autonomy refers to freedom of action, mainly being self-initiating and self-regulating one's own actions (Alexander et al., 2011: 178).

Vanasupa et al. (2010: 916-917) asserts that there is an ample evidence that a learning environment which satisfies students' need for autonomy, competence, and social relatedness is a necessary condition for learners to initiate, monitor, control, and evaluate their own learning.

3. Methodology and Procedures

This section aims at presenting a vivid description of the procedures followed to achieve the aim and verify the hypothesis of the study.

3.1 The Experimental Design

The present study has been built on the Nonrandomized Experimental – Control Group Pretest–Posttest Design. Accordingly, it presents the selection of two groups and assigning them to an experimental and a control group. Both groups are submitted to pre-post administrations of English language learning attitude questionnaire . The independent variable (a SR programme) is administered to the experimental group only, whereas the control group is taught according to the conventional ways of teaching essay writing. The dependent variable of motivation is applied to both groups before and after the experiment. The dependent variables' scores of the experimental group are compared to those of the control group to see whether there is any significant difference between both groups or not.

3.2 Population and Sample of the Study

Fifty of third Year students at the Department of English /College of Education/Al-Qadissiya University are distributed into two sections randomly. One section has been selected randomly to be the experimental group; it is section (A) which includes 25 students and the other section which is section (B) ,to be the control group which also includes students.

Both groups are matched in level of parents' education, gender, intelligence, age, pre-performance in essay writing, and level of motivation towards English language learning.

3.4 Instruments of the Study

In order to achieve the aims of the study, a self-regulation programme in essay writing and a scale that measure students' motivation toward writing have been constructed to be the main instruments used in this study:

3.4.1 The Scale

In order to gain information about the level of the students' motivation towards English language learning, a

scale has been constructed in the present study. In constructing the writing motivation scale, the researcher has adopted Ryan and Deci's Self-Determination theory.

In order to ensure the face validity of the motivation scale, its initial form has been exposed to experts in the field of Measurement and Evaluation and Psychology to decide their validity. In the light of the experts' views concerning the initial writing motivation scale, all of the items are judged valid, since their computed Chi-square values which range between 5.8 -10 are higher than the critical value (3.84) at 0.05 level of significance .

However, the final form of the English writing motivation scale consists of 45 items distributed into three components : (1) Extrinsic Motivation: 18 items, (2) Intrinsic Motivation : 20 items, and (3) Amotivation: 7 items.

3.4.1.1 Construct Validity of the Scale

In order to find out the construct validity, the scale has been applied to a pilot sample. Then the construct validity has been achieved by using the following indications: (1) Items' analysis which include items' discrimination power (2) Matrix Correlation Coefficient.

In order to find out the items' discrimination power for the scale, t-test for two independent samples has been used. It has been found that all the items yield good discrimination power since the computed t- value for each item is found to be higher than the table t-value (1.96) at (0.05) level of significance and under (134) degree of freedom.

Matrix Correlation Coefficient has been obtained by finding out the correlation between the score of each component and other components. By using Pearson Correlation Coefficient, the results reveal that all the components in both instruments are well correlated with each other (see Table 1)

Table (1)

	Motivation	Extrinsic Motivation	Intrinsic Motivation	Amotivation
Motivation	1			
Extrinsic Motivation	.657	1		
Intrinsic Motivation	.674	.781	1	
Amotivation	.750	.651	.675	1

To estimate reliability of the scale, it has been administrated to a pilot sample of (50) and then re-administrated to the same sample after two weeks. The statistical manipulation of the data has been obtained from the two administrations by using Pearson Correlation Formula . The results obtained indicate that the reliability coefficient for the motivationscale is (0.87) and this is considered highly acceptable as a reliability index (Carroll and Hall,1985:118).

3.4.2 Construction of the Self -Regulation Programmein Essay Writing

An SR programme in essay writing is designed by the researcher to help students master higher-level cognitive processes involved in the writing process. In designing the proposed programme, the researcher has adopted Harris and Graham's (SRSD) model (1996) where six basic stages of instruction are used to develop SR in writing: developing background knowledge, discuss it, model it, memorize it, support it, and independent performance (Santangelo et al. 2008:82).

The proposed programme consists of three units that dealt with descriptive, narrative, and argumentative essay writing, respectively. Each unit contains five distinct parts: Developing background knowledge, modeling, guided Practice, recycling, and on your own. This programme

requires thirty-six hours, eight hours of class work per unit, with homework assignment at the end of each unit.

4.Data Analysis, Discussion of Results, Conclusions, Recommendations, and Suggestions

4.1 Data Analysis

In order to verify the second hypothesis which states that there is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and those of the control group in the post-administration of the writing motivation scale, Mann-Whitney " U-test " for two independent samples has been used (see Table 2).

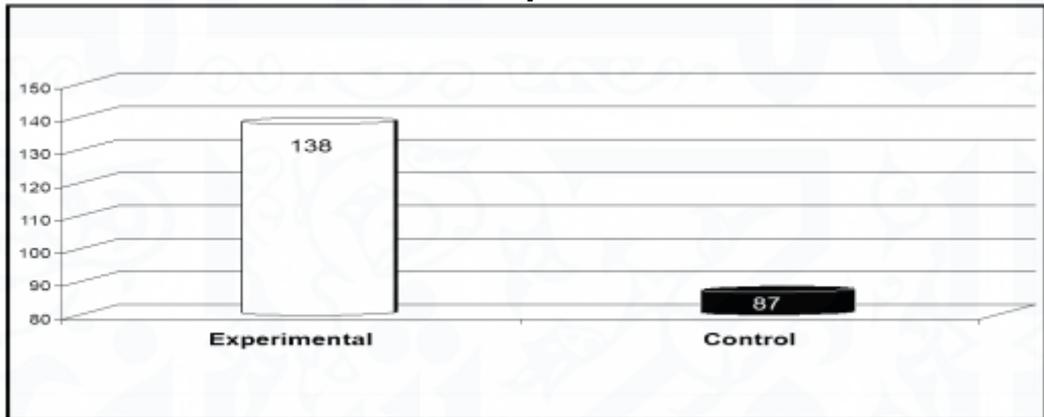
Table 2

Mean, Standard Deviation, and Z-Values of the Writing Motivation Scale Post-Administration for the Experimental and Control Groups

Variable	Groups	No. of Subjects	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sum Ranks	Mean Ranks	U-Value	Z-Value		d.f	Significance Level at 0.05
								Comp. Value	Critical value		
Post- Administration of Writing Motivation Scale	Exp.	25	138.24	9.28386	950	38	0	6.067	1.96	48	Significant
	Control	25	86.88	9.27056	325	13					

Table 2 shows that the mean score of the experimental group is 138.24 and that of the control group is 86.88. The computed Z- value (6.067) is higher than the critical Z-value (1.96) at 0.05 level of significance and 48 degrees of freedom (See Graphic 1 below).

Graphic 1
Mean of the Writing Motivation Scale Post-Administration of the Experimental and the Control Groups



This result shows that there is a statistical significant difference between the experimental group and the control group in motivation toward writing in the post-administration of the writing motivation scale in favour for the experimental group. Thus, null hypothesis which states that "there is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group, which is taught according to the proposed self-regulation learning programme and those of the control group, which is taught conventionally in the post-administration of the writing motivation scale" is rejected.

4.2 Discussion of Results

The current study shows that an SR programme has an impact on students' motivation toward writing. The reason behind the results of the present study from the researcher's point of view are due to the nature of the of the proposed SR programme. Students approached the writing tasks with goals and the extent they self-regulate depends on motivational factors such as their commitment to their goals, their beliefs about the likely outcomes of their actions and their efficacy, or

personal beliefs about their capabilities to learn or perform actions at designated levels.

4.3 Conclusions

In the light of the results obtained, the researcher has concluded that SRL positively affects students' motivation to write. This conclusion comes from the post-administration results of the writing motivation scale which reflect a significant statistical difference in motivation level toward writing, in favour of the experimental group instructed and exposed to the proposed programme.

4.4 Recommendations

In the light of the findings of the present study which give evidence that supports the relationship between SR strategies and motivation, the instructors and syllabus designers are made to enrich the process of teaching writing:

1. EFL syllabus designers are recommended to start designing essay writing syllabuses that adopt SR strategies at English Language Departments to meet the actual academic needs of the students belong to these departments.
2. EFL instructors at college level are recommended to be well-trained and informed about adopting SR approach in writing. This can be done through enrolling them in in-service intensive courses .
3. Students' motivation toward learning effective writing skills must be catered for and enhanced by connecting these skills to their interests and needs.

4.5 Suggestions

A study can be carried out to investigate the impact of SR programme on the motivation students' who study English for Specific Purposes.

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