Self-Regulation and Academic Identity Formation in EFL Learners: An Applied Linguistics Perspective

Nastaran Amouei Ziksari[1]
[1] M.A graduated in English language teaching, Izlamic Azad University Science and Research Branch

ABSTRACT

In recent years, learner-centered approaches in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education have highlighted the importance of learners' active involvement in managing their own learning processes. One of the central constructs in this regard is self-regulation, which refers to learners' ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning strategically and autonomously. Simultaneously, academic identity formation has gained increasing attention in applied linguistics, emphasizing how learners perceive themselves as legitimate participants in academic and educational communities. This paper explores the relationship between self-regulated learning and academic identity formation among EFL learners from an applied linguistics perspective. Adopting a qualitative and descriptive-analytical approach, the study draws on relevant theoretical and empirical literature to examine how self-regulatory strategies contribute to learners' sense of agency, autonomy, and engagement within educational and cultural contexts. The analysis suggests that self-regulation not only facilitates more effective language learning but also plays a crucial role in shaping positive academic identities, enabling learners to actively negotiate meaning and position themselves within learning environments. The paper concludes that integrating self-regulation into language education can support both cognitive development and identity construction, offering important implications for EFL pedagogy and future research in applied linguistics.

Keywords: **Self-Regulation, Academic Identity, EFL Learners, Applied Linguistics, Language Education**

1. *INTRODUCTION*

In recent decades, learner-centered approaches in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education have emphasized the active role of learners in managing their own learning processes. One prominent construct within this orientation is self-regulated learning, defined as learners' strategic control over their cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, and behavioral efforts to achieve learning goals (Zimmerman & Schunk, as cited in Saks & Leijen, 2014). Self-regulation enables learners to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning independently, thereby fostering autonomy and academic achievement in language contexts. Research suggests that self-regulated learning interventions can positively influence learners' motivation, willingness to communicate, and self-efficacy (Zhang, 2024), highlighting its multifaceted importance in EFL settings. In parallel with cognitive and strategic dimensions of learning, identity formation has emerged as a crucial aspect of language learning research, especially within the field of applied linguistics. Identity in language learning refers to how individuals perceive themselves as learners and participants within academic and social communities, influencing their engagement, investment, and persistence in learning activities. Norton's work (2000) has been foundational in establishing the significance of learner identity and investment in second language contexts, emphasizing that learners' sense of self affects how and why they engage with language learning tasks. Recent scholarship further elaborates on the dynamic and socially constructed nature of identity in language education, asserting that learners' identities evolve through interaction and reflection within linguistic environments.

Despite extensive research on self-regulation and separate lines of inquiry on identity in language learning, the intersection of these constructs remains underexplored in EFL contexts, particularly within non-

Western educational environments. While some studies have examined self-regulation's effects on academic persistence and motivation (Sharafi, 2025), and others have investigated identity development in language learners (e.g., Iranian EFL learners' identity profiles), few studies integrate these perspectives to examine how self-regulated learning contributes to academic identity formation among EFL learners. This oversight is noteworthy given that self-regulation may influence how learners view themselves as competent, autonomous participants in academic communities — a critical element of academic identity. Furthermore, within Iranian and broader Islamic educational contexts, research on identity in EFL learning has primarily focused on cultural and linguistic factors without explicitly linking these to learners' self-regulatory processes. Consequently, a gap exists regarding how self-regulated learning strategies might shape EFL learners' academic identities — that is, learners' self-conceptions as capable and committed participants in language learning communities. Addressing this gap is essential for advancing theoretical understanding and providing pedagogical insights that help educators design learning environments that support both strategic regulation and positive identity development.

Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the relationship between self-regulated learning and academic identity formation among EFL learners from an applied linguistics perspective. By synthesizing theoretical insights and empirical evidence, this study explores how learners' strategic regulatory behaviors contribute to their evolving sense of academic self, offering implications for language teaching and future research in EFL education. Building on the theoretical and empirical foundations outlined above, the present study aims to investigate the relationship between self-regulated learning and academic identity formation among EFL learners. Specifically, it seeks to explore how learners' use of self-regulatory strategies contributes to their evolving sense of agency, autonomy, and engagement within educational and cultural contexts. The study also examines which dimensions of self-regulation—cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, and behavioral—most strongly influence learners' perceptions of themselves as competent and active participants in academic communities. Guided by these objectives, the study addresses the following research questions: (1) In what ways do self-regulated learning strategies shape the academic identity formation of EFL learners? (2) Which aspects of self-regulation are most significant in fostering learners' autonomy, engagement, and sense of agency? (3) How do learners perceive the interplay between their self-regulatory practices and their developing academic identities within the EFL learning context? By answering these questions, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the reciprocal relationship between self-regulated learning and academic identity, offering insights that can inform both theory and pedagogical practice in applied linguistics.

2. *LITERATURE REVIEW*

Self-regulated learning (SRL) has been widely studied as an essential non-cognitive factor in language education, encompassing learners' cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, and behavioral strategies to manage their own learning (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2003). In EFL contexts, research has consistently shown that self-regulatory strategies contribute to positive academic outcomes such as increased autonomy, motivation, and self-efficacy. For example, a recent study by Zhang (2024) demonstrated that implementing SRL strategies significantly enhanced Chinese EFL learners' motivation, willingness to communicate, creativity, and self-efficacy, highlighting the multifaceted benefits of self-regulation for language achievement. Similarly, studies conducted in Iranian EFL classrooms have underscored the role of self-regulation in fostering learner autonomy and academic confidence. Ismail, Nikpoo, and Prasad (2023) found that using authentic assessments in Iranian EFL environments enhanced learners' self-regulated learning, autonomy, and self-efficacy, suggesting that instructional design can support SRL development. Moreover, research on structural models has shown that self-regulation interacts with classroom factors such as teacher–learner interaction to influence academic progress in language learning, further reinforcing the importance of self-directed strategic behavior among learners.

Beyond cognitive and motivational outcomes, SRL has also been linked to individual differences in learning processes. For instance, studies exploring writing self-regulation profiles indicate that contextual factors and individual learner characteristics shape how EFL learners employ self-regulatory strategies in specific skill areas, such as writing (2025). Research in EFL writing contexts further highlights that students' active engagement in planning, rehearsal, and self-evaluation supports deeper learning and skill development, underscoring the contextualized nature of SRL. Parallel to research on SRL, identity-related studies in language learning have gained traction within applied linguistics, emphasizing that learners' perceptions of themselves influence their engagement and persistence. Although much of this identity research focuses on social dimensions of language learning contexts, some studies point to the dynamic nature of identity construction in EFL settings. For example, Salimi and Abedi (2022) explored identity aspects among EFL learners in different instructional contexts, revealing that learners adapt and negotiate multiple identity facets depending on educational conditions.

Despite these advances, the empirical intersection between self-regulated learning and academic identity formation remains limited. While existing research separately documents the benefits of SRL and the multifaceted nature of learner identity, integrated studies examining how self-regulatory processes contribute to learners' evolving academic self-conceptions are scarce. Some non-language research suggests conceptual links between self-regulation and persistence or motivation (Sharafi, 2025), but such work has not explicitly connected SRL to academic identity formation in EFL contexts. Furthermore, within Iranian and culturally specific educational settings, identity research in language learning has largely focused on sociocultural or contextual influences without explicitly linking these to SRL mechanisms. This gap highlights the need for empirical inquiry into how strategic self-regulatory behaviors shape learners' self-perceptions as autonomous and engaged academic participants. Addressing this gap would not only en rich theoretical frameworks in applied linguistics but also inform pedagogical practices that support holistic learner development.

The conceptual framework of the present study integrates the constructs of self-regulated learning (SRL) and academic identity, providing a theoretical lens to understand how strategic learning behaviors shape learners' sense of self within EFL contexts. SRL encompasses cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, and behavioral strategies that learners employ to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning processes (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2003). In applied linguistics, these strategies are recognized as central to promoting autonomy, engagement, and effective language acquisition (Zimmerman, 2008). Academic identity, in turn, refers to learners' perceptions of themselves as competent, autonomous, and active participants in academic and linguistic communities (Norton, 2000). It encompasses learners' self-concepts, beliefs about their abilities, and sense of belonging within educational contexts, all of which influence their engagement, motivation, and persistence in language learning activities. Previous research indicates that learners who effectively self-regulate their learning are more likely to develop positive academic identities, characterized by confidence, autonomy, and active participation (Salimi & Abedi, 2022; Zhang, 2024).

Building on these insights, this study posits a reciprocal relationship between SRL and academic identity: while self-regulated learning strategies contribute to the development of academic identity, learners' academic identity may simultaneously reinforce their engagement in strategic self-regulation. Specifically, the framework identifies that the cognitive and metacognitive dimensions of SRL facilitate planning and monitoring, the motivational dimension enhances persistence and self-efficacy, and behavioral strategies promote active participation. Together, these dimensions of SRL interact to shape learners' sense of autonomy, agency, and engagement, which collectively form the core components of academic identity. This conceptual framework not only guides the research questions and methodology of the present study but also provides a foundation for exploring how SRL strategies influence learners' evolving academic identities in culturally specific EFL contexts, such as Iranian language learning environments. By emphasizing the dynamic interplay between strategic regulation and identity construction, the framework underscores the importance of designing pedagogical interventions that simultaneously support cognitive skill development and positive identity formation (Ismail, Nikpoo, & Prasad, 2023; Sharafi, 2025).

3. *RESEARCH METHOD*

This study adopts a qualitative, descriptive-analytical design to investigate the relationship between self-regulated learning (SRL) strategies and academic identity formation among EFL learners. Given the focus on learners' perceptions, experiences, and strategic behaviors, a qualitative approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the dynamic interplay between SRL and academic identity in authentic educational contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach is particularly suitable for understanding culturally specific EFL environments, where learners' practices and identities are shaped by both instructional and sociocultural factors.

3.1. PARTICIPANTS

The study focuses on EFL learners enrolled in Iranian language learning contexts. Participants are purposefully selected to ensure diversity in language proficiency levels, educational backgrounds, and experiences with autonomous learning. Emphasis is placed on gathering rich, detailed accounts of learners' self-regulatory practices and perceptions of their academic identity rather than on achieving statistical generalizability.

3.2. DATA COLLECTION

Data are collected through multiple qualitative instruments to capture a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena. These instruments include:

Semi-structured interviews: To explore learners' self-regulatory strategies, perceptions of autonomy, engagement, and evolving academic identity.

Reflective journals or learning diaries: To examine learners' ongoing self-monitoring, planning, and evaluation of their language learning experiences.

Document analysis (optional): Analysis of learners' written assignments or classroom artifacts to triangulate findings and enrich understanding of SRL in practice.

3.3. DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis follows a **thematic analysis approach** (Braun & Clarke, 2006), allowing for the identification of recurrent patterns and themes that reflect the interaction between self-regulation and academic identity. The analysis process includes:

1. Familiarization with the data through repeated reading of transcripts and journals.
2. Initial coding of text segments relevant to SRL strategies and identity formation.
3. Categorization of codes into broader themes representing cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, and behavioral dimensions of SRL and components of academic identity such as autonomy, agency, and engagement.
4. Interpretation of patterns to examine the reciprocal influence between self-regulated learning and learners' academic identities.

3.4. ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Participants' confidentiality and voluntary participation are strictly maintained. All personal identifiers are removed from transcripts and journals. Informed consent is obtained, and participants are fully briefed on the purpose and scope of the study.

4. *RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS*

The analysis of interview transcripts, reflective journals, and classroom artifacts revealed several recurring themes that illustrate the interplay between self-regulated learning (SRL) and academic identity formation among EFL learners. These themes are organized around the dimensions of SRL (cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, and behavioral) and their influence on the core components of academic identity, including autonomy, agency, and engagement.

1. Cognitive and Metacognitive Strategies

Analysis of the data revealed that cognitive and metacognitive strategies were foundational to learners' self-regulated learning practices. Cognitive strategies, such as organizing study materials, summarizing texts, and applying language rules in practice, allowed learners to structure their learning in a manageable and goal-directed way. Metacognitive strategies, including planning, monitoring, and evaluating one's own progress, were particularly emphasized by participants. For instance, learners reported setting clear daily or weekly objectives for vocabulary acquisition, writing tasks, and speaking exercises, and periodically reviewing their performance to adjust study techniques when necessary. This deliberate planning enabled learner to anticipate challenges, select appropriate strategies, and reflect critically on their outcomes, thereby fostering a sense of control and ownership over the learning process. Several participants highlighted the role of self-reflection and monitoring as central to their cognitive regulation. One learner noted that keeping a learning diary helped them identify recurring errors and track improvements over time, which not only enhanced their language skills but also increased their confidence in independently managing learning tasks. Another participant emphasized using concept mapping and note-taking as tools to structure complex information, illustrating how metacognitive strategies directly supported comprehension and retention. These findings are consistent with prior research demonstrating that cognitive and metacognitive self-regulation enhances learner autonomy and academic performance in EFL contexts (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2003; Zimmerman, 2008; Zhang, 2024).

Moreover, the integration of cognitive and metacognitive strategies appeared to contribute to academic identity formation. Learners who actively planned and monitored their learning described a growing sense of competence and agency, perceiving themselves as capable participants within the academic and linguistic community. This aligns with applied linguistics literature emphasizing that strategic regulation not only improves learning outcomes but also shapes learners' self-perceptions and engagement (Norton, 2000; Salimi & Abedi, 2022). By linking cognitive/metacognitive practices with evolving identity, the findings suggest that structured, reflective learning activities serve as both a practical and psychosocial foundation for developing autonomous and confident language learners. Importantly, the qualitative data indicated that these strategies are context-dependent, influenced by classroom practices, instructional support, and cultural expectations. Learners in environments that encouraged planning, goal-setting, and reflective practice reported higher levels of strategic engagement and greater self-perceived competence. This observation underscores the interaction between individual regulation and educational context, supporting the conceptual framework's premise that self-regulation and academic identity are mutually reinforcing (Ismail, Nikpoo, & Prasad, 2023).

2. Motivational Regulation

The analysis of learners' reflective journals and interview data revealed that motivational regulation plays a pivotal role in sustaining engagement and fostering a positive academic identity in EFL learning contexts. Motivational regulation refers to learners' ability to initiate, maintain, and adjust their effort and persistence toward learning goals despite challenges or setbacks (Pintrich, 2000). Participants reported employing various strategies to regulate their motivation, including setting personal incentives, employing self-reward systems, maintaining focus through goal visualization, and using self-encouragement during challenging tasks. Learners emphasized that managing emotional and motivational states was as critical as planning and monitoring learning tasks. For instance, one participant noted that when faced with complex reading tasks, reminding themselves of previous successful experiences helped them persist and maintain engagement. Another learner highlighted the practice of creating mini-rewards, such as taking short breaks after completing a writing task, as a strategy to sustain motivation. These findings align with research suggesting that motivational regulation is closely linked to learner autonomy, self-efficacy, and resilience, which in turn influence language learning outcomes (Ismail, Nikpoo, & Prasad, 2023; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020).

Moreover, motivational regulation was reported to have a direct impact on academic identity formation. Learners who actively managed their motivation described themselves as capable and self-directed, reinforcing their sense of agency and engagement within the academic community. This aligns with findings by Zhang (2024), indicating that learners' motivational strategies not only enhance persistence and performance but also strengthen their identification as autonomous and competent participants in learning environments. In the present study, learners frequently described a feedback loop: effective motivational regulation improved engagement and perceived competence, which further reinforced their commitment to using SRL strategies. Importantly, the qualitative evidence highlighted that motivational regulation interacts dynamically with cognitive and metacognitive strategies. For example, learners who set specific goals (cognitive strategy) and monitored progress (metacognitive strategy) also reported that these structured activities enhanced their intrinsic motivation. This interplay demonstrates the holistic nature of SRL, where cognitive, metacognitive, and motivational dimensions collectively shape learners' academic engagement and identity. The findings underscore the theoretical proposition that self-regulation, particularly motivational management, is both a driver and outcome of learners' evolving academic identity in EFL contexts.

3. Behavioral Regulation and Active Participation

The analysis of the qualitative data highlighted that behavioral regulation is a key component of self-regulated learning that directly shapes learners' academic identity in EFL contexts. Behavioral strategies refer to the observable actions learners take to implement and sustain their learning, including consistent practice, seeking feedback, engaging in classroom activities, and collaborating with peers (Zimmerman, 2008). Participants consistently emphasized that actively participating in learning activities enhanced their sense of competence and belonging within the classroom community. Learners described concrete behaviors such as attending supplementary language workshops, participating in group discussions, and seeking clarification from instructors as integral to maintaining engagement and improving performance. One participant noted that regularly asking for feedback on writing tasks not only helped refine their language skills but also made them feel recognized and valued as active members of the learning environment. Another highlighted that collaborative exercises and peer interaction provided opportunities to apply strategies learned independently, reinforcing both skill development and self-perception as capable language learners.

Moreover, behavioral regulation was found to interact closely with cognitive, metacognitive, and motivational strategies. Learners who systematically planned and monitored their learning (cognitive and metacognitive strategies) reported higher adherence to behavioral routines, while those with strong motivational regulation maintained consistent participation despite challenges. This synergy underscores the holistic and interdependent nature of self-regulated learning, illustrating how different dimensions collectively contribute to effective learning behaviors and identity formation (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020; Zhang, 2024). Importantly, participants indicated that active participation reinforced their academic identity by providing tangible evidence of competence and agency. Engaging consistently in classroom and extracurricular activities enabled learners to perceive themselves as autonomous and capable participants, strengthening their sense of ownership over the learning process. This finding aligns with Norton's (2000) perspective that identity is socially constructed through interaction and participation in learning communities. In sum, behavioral regulation not only facilitates practical skill development but also serves as a critical mechanism for cultivating learners' academic identity, highlighting its central role within the conceptual framework of this study.

4. Reciprocal Interaction between SRL and Academic Identity

The analysis of qualitative data revealed a dynamic, bidirectional relationship between self-regulated learning (SRL) and academic identity among EFL learners. Participants consistently indicated that their engagement in self-regulatory strategies not only shaped their academic identity but was also influenced by their existing sense of self as competent and autonomous learners. This reciprocal interaction suggests that SRL and academic identity reinforce each other in a continuous cycle, enhancing both learning outcomes and self-perception. Learners who actively employed cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, and behavioral strategies reported increased confidence, a stronger sense of agency, and heightened engagement in classroom activities. For instance, one participant noted that successfully planning and executing a writing task boosted their belief in their ability to succeed in future challenges, thereby strengthening their identification as a capable learner. Conversely, learners with a strong emerging academic identity were more likely to initiate and sustain strategic learning behaviors, illustrating that identity acts as both a driver and outcome of self-regulation (Salimi & Abedi, 2022; Zhang, 2024).

This reciprocal relationship also manifested in learners' perceptions of autonomy and engagement. As learners became more self-directed through SRL strategies, they reported feeling a deeper sense of ownership over their learning, which reinforced their motivation to continue engaging in strategic practices. Similarly, learners' enhanced academic identity provided a psychological foundation for persistence, goal-setting, and reflective practices, demonstrating the intertwined nature of self-regulation and identity formation (Ismail, Nikpoo, & Prasad, 2023; Norton, 2000). Furthermore, the findings indicate that this dynamic is contextually influenced, particularly by classroom culture, instructional support, and sociocultural norms. Environments that encouraged autonomy, collaborative learning, and reflective practice amplified the mutual reinforcement between SRL and academic identity. In contrast, restrictive or teacher-centered contexts sometimes hindered learners' ability to fully exercise self-regulation and develop a strong academic identity. These results support the study's conceptual framework and theoretical premise, confirming that fostering SRL strategies can simultaneously cultivate learners' academic identity, and that a positive academic identity, in turn, motivates sustained engagement in self-regulated learning.

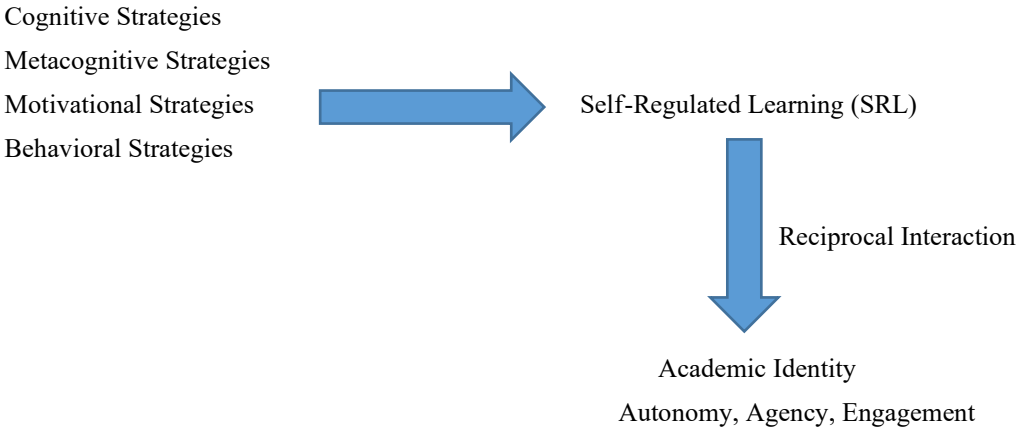


Figure.1: **Conceptual Framework of the Reciprocal Relationship between Self-Regulated Learning and Academic Identity in EFL Contexts**

The conceptual framework of the present study illustrates the dynamic and reciprocal relationship between self-regulated learning (SRL) and academic identity in EFL contexts. As depicted in Figure 1, self-regulated learning is constructed through four interrelated dimensions: cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, motivational regulation, and behavioral regulation. These dimensions collectively enable learners to plan, monitor, sustain, and enact their learning processes in a strategic and goal-oriented manner. The framework further demonstrates that effective engagement in self-regulated learning practices contributes directly to the development of learners' academic identity, particularly in terms of autonomy, agency, and engagement. As learners gain greater control over their learning processes, they begin to perceive themselves as competent, self-directed, and active participants within the academic community. This strengthened academic identity, in turn, reinforces learners' willingness and ability to employ self-regulatory strategies.

The findings of the present study provide compelling evidence for the central role of self-regulated learning (SRL) in shaping EFL learners' academic identity. Consistent with social-cognitive perspectives on learning, the results demonstrate that cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, and behavioral strategies function not only as mechanisms for academic success but also as foundational elements in the construction of learners' self-perceptions as autonomous and competent language users (Zimmerman, 2008; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Learners who actively planned, monitored, and evaluated their learning reported a stronger sense of control over academic tasks, which aligns with prior research emphasizing the role of strategic regulation in fostering learner autonomy and engagement.nThe prominence of motivational regulation in the findings further underscores its significance within the SRL framework. Learners' ability to sustain effort, manage emotional responses, and persist despite challenges echoes previous studies suggesting that motivational control is a decisive factor in long-term academic engagement and identity development (Ismail, Nikpoo, & Prasad, 2023; Zhang, 2024). The present study extends this body of research by illustrating how motivational regulation contributes not only to task persistence but also to learners' evolving identification as active and capable members of the academic community.

Moreover, the results highlight the critical role of behavioral regulation and active participation in reinforcing academic identity. Consistent with Norton's (2000) sociocultural view of identity, learners' engagement in classroom interaction, feedback-seeking, and collaborative practices emerged as key sites where identity is negotiated and enacted. Through sustained participation, learners experienced tangible confirmation of their competence, which further strengthened their sense of agency and belonging within the learning environment. This finding supports the argument that identity development is inseparable from social practice and contextual engagement. Perhaps the most significant contribution of this study lies in revealing the reciprocal relationship between self-regulated learning and academic identity. While previous research has often examined SRL as a predictor of academic performance, the present findings demonstrate that academic identity simultaneously acts as a catalyst for sustained self-regulation. Learners with a stronger sense of academic self were more inclined to initiate and maintain SRL strategies, creating a self-reinforcing cycle of strategic engagement and identity affirmation (Salimi & Abedi, 2022). This bidirectional dynamic adds depth to existing theoretical models by positioning academic identity not merely as an outcome of learning, but as an active component of the self-regulatory process. Taken together, these findings suggest that pedagogical practices aimed at enhancing SRL should move beyond strategy instruction alone and explicitly address identity-related dimensions of learning. Creating instructional environments that promote reflection, autonomy, and meaningful participation can simultaneously strengthen learners' self-regulatory capacities and their academic identity. Such an integrated approach holds significant implications for EFL pedagogy, teacher education, and curriculum design, particularly in contexts where learner autonomy and sustained engagement are critical goals.

5. *CONCLUSION*

This study examined the role of self-regulated learning (SRL) in the development of academic identity among EFL learners, focusing on cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, and behavioral dimensions of self-regulation. The findings confirm that self-regulated learning functions not only as a strategic mechanism for improving language learning outcomes but also as a critical process through which learners construct and negotiate their academic identity. Learners who actively engaged in planning, monitoring, motivational control, and sustained participation demonstrated higher levels of autonomy, agency, and engagement, supporting prior research that positions SRL as a core component of effective and meaningful learning (Zimmerman, 2008; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). One of the key contributions of this study lies in highlighting the **reciprocal relationship** between self-regulated learning and academic identity. While engagement in SRL strategies strengthens learners' perceptions of competence and self-direction, a positive and evolving academic identity simultaneously encourages continued strategic engagement. This bidirectional relationship aligns with sociocultural and identity-oriented perspectives that view learners' sense of self as both an outcome and a driving force of learning behavior (Norton, 2000; Salimi & Abedi, 2022).

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings suggest that language instruction should move beyond isolated strategy training and adopt an integrated approach that simultaneously supports self-regulation and identity development. Learning environments that promote reflection, autonomy-supportive instruction, meaningful participation, and constructive feedback are more likely to foster both strategic learning and positive academic identities (Ismail, Nikpoo, & Prasad, 2023; Zhang, 2024). In conclusion, self-regulated learning should be conceptualized as both a cognitive and socio-psychological process that empowers learners as autonomous, engaged, and confident members of academic communities. By recognizing the intertwined nature of SRL and academic identity, EFL educators and curriculum designers can create more inclusive and sustainable learning experiences that support learners' long-term academic development.

6. *SUGGESTIONS*

While the present study provides valuable insights into the reciprocal relationship between self-regulated learning and academic identity in EFL contexts, several directions for further research emerge. First, future studies could adopt longitudinal research designs to examine how self-regulated learning strategies and academic identity develop and interact over time. Such approaches would allow researchers to capture the dynamic nature of identity formation and explore how sustained engagement in self-regulatory practices influences learners' trajectories across different stages of language learning. Second, future research may benefit from employing **mixed-methods or quantitative designs to complement qualitative findings and examine the strength and directionality of relationships between specific SRL components and dimensions of academic identity. The use of validated measurement instruments could provide more precise insights into how cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, and behavioral regulation differentially contributes to learners' autonomy, agency, and engagement. Third, further studies could explore the role of contextual and sociocultural factors, such as instructional practices, assessment regimes, classroom discourse, and institutional expectations, in mediating the relationship between SRL and academic identity. Comparative studies across diverse educational settings, proficiency levels, or cultural contexts may reveal how learning environments either facilitate or constrain learners' self-regulatory development and identity construction. Finally, future research might investigate the impact of pedagogical interventions designed explicitly to integrate self-regulated learning strategy instruction with identity-focused practices. Experimental or design-based research approaches could examine how reflective tasks, learner autonomy-supportive instruction, and collaborative learning environments foster both strategic learning and positive academic identities. Such research would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how SRL and academic identity can be intentionally cultivated within EFL education.

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