



# Assessing Self-Regulated Learning Ability of Senior English Majored Students through Writing Graduation Theses at Ho Chi Minh City University of Industry and Trade

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**Abstract:** In the contemporary student-centered educational landscape, self-regulated learning (SRL) is crucial in influencing students' academic achievement. This study aims (1) to evaluate students' self-regulated learning capacity through the process of writing the graduation thesis of senior English-majored students at the University of Industry and Trade. Furthermore, this study (2) analyzes the correlation between the results of the graduation thesis and genders. There were 277 participants in the research, including 138 females and 89 males. The study used a mixed-method approach, which included a survey and interviews with seven students. The research results anticipate positive perceptions of students' self-regulated learning ability from learners and a negative association between thesis scores and genders. This study provides significant insights for both higher education institutions and students.

**Keywords:** Spe Self-regulated learning ability, Senior English Majored Students, outcomes, writing graduation theses

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Self-regulated learning (SRL) has become essential in higher education, enabling students to spontaneously and effectively manage their learning processes. Writing a graduation thesis offers a practical setting for senior English majors to improve their writing skills, which are essential for academic and professional advancement. This study aims to assess the self-regulated learning skills of senior English majors during this period of writing at Ho Chi Minh City University of Industry and Trade. The study aims to determine how graduation thesis writing facilitates self-regulated learning by analyzing students' goal-setting, self-monitoring, and reflection strategies. The research will examine the correlation between their outcomes and genders. By looking into these factors, the study hopes to give information that could help make support systems that are more suitable for each student. This will create a better learning environment and give recent graduates the chance to continue learning throughout their lives.

## 2. BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Definitions and Characteristics of Self-Regulated Learning

Zimmerman (2002) defines self-regulated learning as the process by which learners independently manage themselves to transform cognitive ability into academic skills. The difference between self-regulated learners and non-self-regulated learners is in their ability to appropriately assess their strengths and limitations and engage in appropriate activities accordingly. These students regularly participate in academic tasks, demonstrating confidence, tenacity, and flexibility (Zimmerman, 1990). The foundations of self-regulated learning are complex and contain terms such as "self-study," "self-planning," and "self-education" (Hiemstra, 2004). Self-regulation is often described as a competence, skill, or process, sometimes linked to learning strategies or deliberate actions meant to reach personal goals (Pintrich, 2004; Zimmerman, 2000a).

Self-regulated learning includes cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, behavioral, and environmental components. Zimmerman and Schunk (2001a) contend that self-regulated learners improve their learning by planning, adjusting their attitudes and beliefs, and effectively managing resources. They do not depend exclusively on educators but actively take charge of their learning,

utilizing strategies such as information organization, planning, monitoring, and modifying learning habits to achieve goals.

## **2.2. Phases of Self-Regulated Learning**

Zimmerman (1998, 2000a) developed a "three-phase cyclical model of self-regulation," including (a) the foresight phase, (b) the performance phase, and (c) the self-examination phase. A self-regulated learner combines cognitive methods with core beliefs about their motives at every stage. Social and environmental factors may influence these perspectives. In the foresight phase, a self-regulated learner combines strong self-efficacy beliefs with strategic goal-setting and planning. This aids them in formulating and accomplishing attainable goals. Accomplishing these goals bolsters the learner's confidence and inspires them to seek higher ambitions. During the performance phase, individuals utilize self-regulation abilities, including concentration, attention, and self-instruction, alongside self-observation approaches such as self-monitoring and record keeping. Corno (2001) integrated task environment management at this phase, which included soliciting support from instructors and peers. Ultimately, during the self-reflection phase, students evaluate their work by recognizing the factors that affect their outcomes. This assessment facilitates future planning and implementation, highlighting the cyclical nature of self-regulated learning (SRL).

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1. Research Design**

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies for data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2012). This study mostly uses a quantitative strategy to get data. Numerous rationales underpinned this mixed-methods research. Initially, the researcher gathered both quantitative and qualitative data using basic English assessments, questionnaires, and interviews to address the research topics, including seven students. Moreover, mixed-methods research "offers a more comprehensive understanding of research issues than the exclusive use of either approach" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). Fraenkel and Wallen (2009) assert that mixed methods not only facilitate the elucidation, explication, and comprehensive comprehension of the relationships between dependent and independent variables, but also serve to "confirm or cross-validate relationships identified between variables, particularly when we juxtapose quantitative and qualitative methods to ascertain if they converge on a singular interpretation of a phenomenon." Creswell (2012) posited that researchers seeking to use the advantages of both quantitative and qualitative data should employ this study strategy.

### **3.2. Objectives of the Research:**

This study primarily intends (1) to analyze the self-regulated capacity perceptions of senior English majors at the University of Industry and Trade (HUIT). Furthermore, the study (2) examines the correlation between the outcomes and the genders.

### **3.3. Research Questions:**

The study seeks to investigate the subsequent research questions:

**RQ1.** How do senior English majors assess their self-regulation ability in writing their graduation theses?

**RQ2.** What is the correlation between their graduation thesis results and gender?

### **3.4. Research Location and Objectives**

#### *3.4.1. Research Location*

The Ho Chi Minh City University of Industry and Trade (HUIT) conducted the study. HUIT, founded four decades ago. HUIT has three established campuses situated near the Tan Phu District. The diverse and exceptional educational environment that HUIT students encounter prepares them to become successful individuals and responsible global citizens. The instructors at HUIT have substantial expertise and credentials.

#### *3.4.2. Participants*

The research participants consist of a significant population (Amin, 2005), including a sample of 227 senior English majors at HUIT who have completed their internship semester. The sample consisted of 138 females and 89 males, aged 21 to 23 years.

### **Theoretical Knowledge of Graduation Thesis**

According to Swales and Feak (2004), a thesis is a formal and lengthy discourse, usually written by a candidate for the doctoral degree at a university, a treatise advancing a new point of view resulting from research. The theoretical foundation of a thesis is built upon the existing body of knowledge in a particular field of study. Students are required to engage critically with the literature, and identify gaps, contradictions, or areas that need further exploration. This critical engagement forms the basis of their research, as they seek to address these gaps through their own work. As noted by Hart (1998), a good thesis must be grounded in the literature of the field, which not only provides a context for the study but also supports the argument the student is making.

Furthermore, the process of writing a thesis is iterative and involves multiple drafts and revisions. This reflects the evolving nature of research, where initial ideas may be refined or rethought as new insights are gained. Murray (2011) emphasized that "the process of thesis writing involves drafting, reviewing, revising, and editing, and these activities are not just about improving the text but also about developing the ideas" (p. 22). In conclusion, a graduation thesis is a pivotal academic project that integrates theoretical knowledge with practical research skills. It challenges students to contribute original insights to their field of study while honing their abilities.

When writing, SRL is very important. Self-regulated learners (SRLs) take charge of the writing process by setting goals, keeping track of their work, and changing their strategies as needed (Kaplan, Lichtinger & Margulis, 2011, Schunk & Zimmerman, 2007). SRLs are aware of how they write and are proficient at using the right methods throughout the writing process. This helps them make better-organized and finished compositions. As a result, self-regulation becomes an important skill that can help students for a long time after they graduate. Writing a thesis involves many complex steps, including selecting a topic, conducting related research, organizing a study, collecting and analyzing data, and drafting the thesis itself. At each level, you need to be able to coordinate your actions, plan strategically, and process important information. Self-regulated learning (SRL), according to Schunk and Ertmer (2000), occurs when a person changes their behavior, drive, and thoughts on purpose and in a planned way while doing school work. If students cannot control themselves well enough, they might be unable to finish their theses on time, which could delay their academic progress and general success. According to Graham and Harris (2000), self-regulated learners excel in the thesis-writing process by establishing clear objectives, monitoring their progress, and systematically revising their work.

### **3.5. Instruments**

This research included two separate instruments: questionnaires and interviews.

#### *3.5.1. Surveys*

A set of questionnaires was used in this study to answer the original question about how students thought they were doing with self-regulated learning (SRL) while writing the thesis. It has Zimmerman's three main stages of self-regulated learning: foresight, performance, and self-reflection. These stages help with setting goals, carrying out plans, and making changes based on feedback and evaluation.

The initial section of the questionnaire sought to gather demographic information about individuals. In the subsequent section, the author developed the questionnaire employing a five-point Likert scale. The response options for the inquiries evaluating students' perceptions of self-regulated learning (SRL) competencies in writing their internship ranged from 1 to 5, specifically: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = greatly agree. The questionnaire has three categories with 18 items about the phases of forethought, performance, and self-examination; the last section seeks to gather their scores, which vary from below 5 to over 8 marks. The surveys are based on the underlying research, specifically focusing on the three dimensions of Zimmerman's self-regulation models (2000).

#### *3.5.2. Interviews*

The research employed a semi-structured interview after the course to acquire qualitative data, as these interactive conversations enabled the researcher to explore

### **3.6. Data analysis**

Creswell's (2012) publishing protocol guided the evaluation of the data. We categorized the data into several study instruments, including assessments, surveys, and interviews. The researcher employed

the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software (version 26.0) to examine the test outcomes. The researcher thereafter started data input on the computer for analysis.

We computed a statistical summary of the test data and questions shown in the table to provide an overview and direction. A summary of the data is shown by the researcher. This includes the highest score (Max), lowest score (Min), average score (Mean), score range, mean error analysis of variation around the mean, correlation, and standard deviation (SD), which shows the second degree of variance.

The researcher used Cognitive Forms to collect data from the questionnaire and then SPSS software (version 26.0) to analyze it. This gave an overview of how the participants thought about their overall self-regulated learning (SRL) abilities and the connection between these factors and the results.

The researcher transcribed the interview information verbatim, categorized it, organized it into topics, and later presented it. The researcher classified the interview findings into three main categories: The researcher first presented an overview of students' self-regulated learning capacities and subsequently collected data from the English 1 semester. The researcher subsequently correlated the interview data with the assumptions established by the structured questionnaire to derive a conclusion.

### 3.7. Reliability

Reliability Statistics		
	Cronbach's Alpha	Alpha
Cronbach's Alpha	Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.955	.955	18

Cronbach's alpha technique, as detailed in Table 1 below. Siregar (2014) asserts that a research instrument is considered reliable if its coefficient of dependability surpasses 0.6. The researchers obtained a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.955 in this study, signifying its reliability. Consequently, the data indicates that both the research hypothesis and the null hypothesis were rejected.

## 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Questionnaires

#### RQ1. How do senior English majors assess their self-regulation ability in writing their graduation theses?

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
<b>1. Fore thought phase</b>			
1. I often set specific and clear goals to complete my writing activities.	3.82	.846	227
2. I make detailed plans to achieve my thesis goals	3.74	.880	227
3. I create an outline or schedule for each task	3.51	1.049	227
4. I am confident that I can complete my thesis writing well.	3.57	.959	227
5. I often visualize positive results from my thesis writing efforts.	3.86	.896	227
6. I am clearly aware of the value and significance of my thesis for my personal goals.	4.15	.810	227
7. I am aware that writing thesis helps me improve my skills and understanding.	4.19	.802	227

The second section of the questionnaire, as outlined in Table 2, aimed to assess students' perceptions of the duration of their internship semester. Examining the three phases of self-regulation—forethought phase, performance phase, and self-examining phase—helps one to see both advantages and drawbacks in learners' capacity to properly control their English learning process. These results point to areas that need work and offer understanding of how students handle motivation, task completion, and introspection.

Students demonstrate significant awareness of the value and relevance of learning English during the **foresight phase**, with mean scores of  $M=4.15$  and  $M=4.19$  for items related to personal aims and skill development. This demonstrates a robust foundation of intrinsic drive, which is crucial for initiating and sustaining learning endeavors. Furthermore, students see favorable outcomes ( $M=3.86$ ), suggesting that mental imagery sustains their motivation. The results indicate that while students exhibit considerable competence in goal-setting, planning, and scheduling ( $M = 3.74$  and  $M = 3.51$ ), they struggle to convert their ideas into comprehensive plans. The relatively low confidence in completing assignments ( $M=3.57$ ) indicates that certain students may lack self-efficacy, thus hindering their motivation to do challenging tasks.

Table 3. The correlation between the self-regulation ability and the scores in the performance phase

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
<b>2. Performance Phase</b>			
8. I maintain high concentration in the process of writing thesis, even though there are disturbing factors.	3.52	.904	227
9. I often use writing strategies like concept mapping or summaries.	3.41	1.032	227
10. I imagine or visualize how to complete writing thesis tasks before doing them.	3.66	.984	227
11. I remind myself of the steps to take through internal dialogues.	3.69	.983	227
12. I often track my writing progress in improving my skills.	3.67	.937	227
13. I experiment with different study strategies to find the most effective method.	3.61	1.022	227

The **performance phase** demonstrates in Table 3, a slightly restricted application of self-regulation strategies, with mean scores between  $M=3.41$  and  $M=3.69$ . Students have a moderate ability to visualize thesis completion ( $M=3.66$ ) and remind themselves ( $M=3.69$ ), hence maintaining writing engagement. They also assess their own development ( $M=3.67$ ), an essential ability for maintaining alignment with their objectives. Nonetheless, they seem to experience difficulties with focus ( $M = 3.52$ ), suggesting that external distractions sometimes impede their learning. Additionally, the question with the lowest score in this phase ( $M=3.41$ ) was about using learning techniques like idea mapping or summarization. This suggests that students may not be good at or consistent with using good strategies. This indicates that targeted instruction and expertise in strategy implementation are essential.

The students exhibit robust reflective abilities during **the self-assessment phase** in Table 4, as indicated by their elevated scores in result interpretation ( $M=3.96$ ) and satisfaction with their progress ( $M=3.89$ ). This demonstrates their ability to critically assess their performance and seek inspiration for growth. Nonetheless, their capacity to modify their learning strategies in response to feedback and outcomes is comparatively weaker ( $M = 3.71$  and  $M = 3.80$ ), indicating a divergence between self-reflection and actionable adjustments. While students acknowledge the necessity of altering their strategies when results are inadequate, their implementation of these modifications may be more consistent and effective.



Learners often exhibit robust motivational foundations in the foresight phase, moderate execution skills in the performance phase, and somewhat effective reflection practices in the self-examination phase. The discrepancies in scores, specifically the standard deviations for method utilization, satisfaction, and planning, signify significant variances in learners' self-regulation abilities. This indicates the necessity for targeted therapies. Conducting seminars on comprehensive preparation, strategic use, and reflection-to-action methodologies might connect these phases. Fostering a pleasant learning environment that allows students to share strategies and get feedback helps enhance their self-regulation skills, hence allowing a more successful journey in academic writing.

**Table4.** Student's perceptions of self-regulation in writing graduation theses

Table 4. The correlation between the self-regulation ability and the scores in the self-examination phase			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
<b>3.Self-Examination Phase</b>			
14. I regularly compare my learning results with my set goals.	3.76	.948	227
15. I think about why I achieved or did not achieve the expected results	3.96	.938	227
16. I feel satisfied when I see my progress in writing my thesis.	3.89	.911	227
17. When I don't get good results, I change my writing strategy to improve efficiency.	3.71	.919	227
18.I always try to adjust my writing method based on my assessments and feedback.	3.80	.912	227

**RQ2.What is the correlation between their outcomes and their genders?**

The nearly nonexistent association indicates that gender does not significantly affect scores. The disparities in results between male and female students are minimal and not systemic.

According to the results, gender-neutral skills like goal-setting, self-monitoring, and reflection may be developed by students based on their own needs and preferences, rather than differences that are inherent between men and women.

The data indicates no significant link between gender and scores (Pearson link = -0.023, p = 0.727). This suggests that gender does not significantly influence SRL abilities and results, but rather, other individual or environmental variables likely do.

To get a better understanding of the factors that affect SRL performance, future research should look into more variables, such as socioeconomic status, personality traits, or educational settings.

Table5. The correlation between students' outcomes and their genders			
<b>Correlations</b>			
		Sex	Scores
Sex	Pears on Correlation	1	<b>-.023</b>
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<b>.727</b>
	N	227	227
Scores	Pearson Correlation	-.023	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.727	
	N	227	227

## **4.2. Interviews**

The interviews with seven students offer insights into their practices and problems across the three phases of self-regulated learning. During the forethought phase, students 1 and 3 emphasized the significance of goal-setting and motivation, influenced by their awareness of the professional advantages of English proficiency. Nevertheless, they had difficulties in planning and lacked direction to create explicit paths. During the performance phase, students 5 and 6 said it was hard to stay focused because of things like social media and using different methods, even when they were using strategies like mind maps or summaries.

Ultimately, during the self-reflection phase, students such as Student 2, Student 4, and Student 7 articulated a pronounced inclination to assess their development and modify their approaches, although they saw constraints due to insufficient feedback and unfulfilled expectations. These results show how important it is to get organized and help to improve focus, strategy-making, and reflective methods. This is in line with the idea that self-regulated learning (SRL) is based on setting goals, keeping track of progress, and reflecting on oneself. This qualitative perspective enhances the quantitative data, offering a more profound comprehension of the obstacles and potential for enhancing self-regulation among major English learners.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The findings of this research highlight the multifaceted nature of self-regulated learning (SRL) among non-major students learning English at the University of Industry and Trade. Through an analysis of the three phases of SRL—forethought, performance, and self-reflection—it is evident that while students demonstrate a general awareness of the importance of English and motivation to learn, significant gaps exist in their ability to effectively regulate their learning processes.

In the forethought phase, students show an understanding of goal-setting and the relevance of English for personal and professional advancement. However, many lack the structured planning and clear pathways needed to translate motivation into actionable steps. Qualitative interviews confirm this gap, as students expressed challenges in identifying and implementing effective strategies to achieve their goals.

The performance phase reveals difficulties in maintaining focus and employing consistent strategies during the learning process. While some students experiment with various approaches, distractions and a lack of discipline often undermine their efforts. Quantitative results indicate moderate use of strategies such as concept mapping and internal dialogues, but the standard deviations suggest a wide variance in individual practices. Interviews further emphasize the struggle with concentration and the inconsistent application of study techniques, underscoring the need for support in this area.

The self-reflection phase highlights a mixed ability among students to evaluate their progress and adapt their learning methods. While students report a sense of accomplishment when progress is evident, they often struggle to critically analyze their outcomes and make effective adjustments. Qualitative insights reveal a lack of feedback and structured guidance as key barriers to improvement.

Finding links between the forethought, performance, and self-examination stages shows how important self-regulated learning components are for improving writing skills. The establishment of goals, strategic planning, and intrinsic motivation in the foresight phase create a robust basis for academic achievement. The performance phase highlights active participation, flexibility, and self-assessment, underscoring the significance of sustaining concentration and testing effective solutions. The self-examination phase emphasizes the need for contemplation, self-assessment, and strategic modifications informed by feedback, which facilitate ongoing development. These results show that students are more likely to reach their academic goals if they use a complete self-regulated learning strategy that includes proactive planning, active execution, and reflective refinement. This extensive approach offers significant insights for educators to develop treatments that promote self-regulated learning skills and improve student performance, and the correlation study revealed no statistical relevance between gender and scores.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study proposes various specific interventions to improve self-regulated learning (SRL) in senior English majors during the preparation of their graduation theses. Initially, colleges ought to offer organized seminars concentrating on self-regulated learning practices, including goal planning, time

management, and self-assessment, specifically designed for the thesis-writing process. Zimmerman (2002) asserts that “Self-regulation is not a cognitive ability or an academic performance skill; instead, it is the self-directed process by which learners convert their cognitive abilities into academic skills.” Advisors must incorporate explicit self-regulated learning assistance into their coaching by prompting students to establish definitive milestones and consistently evaluate their progress. Moreover, integrating SRL skill evaluations into the curriculum at an earlier stage might facilitate the gradual development of these competencies among students rather than limiting their acquisition to the thesis phase. Schunk and Zimmerman (2012) contend that promoting self-regulated learning (SRL) is crucial for preparing kids for lifetime learning and academic achievement. We can cultivate opportunities for peer learning, like thesis-writing groups, to enhance mutual accountability and collaborative problem-solving. Institutions have to furnish digital tools and resources, such as online planners or reflective diaries, to aid students in monitoring and controlling their development. These programs, along with ongoing ways for students and advisors to give and receive feedback, can greatly improve students' ability to self-regulate their learning, which in turn can greatly improve the quality of their academic work.

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