Questioning Academic Success through Self-regulation, Self-esteem and Attitude in Foreign Language Learning (A Case Study)

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Abstract—The present study investigates the relationship between self-regulation, self-esteem, attitude and foreign language achievement (FLA). The research was conducted with 383 students from Gaziantep University Higher School of Foreign Languages. The data were collected through a modified questionnaire adapted from three different questionnaires. The statistical results showed that there was a positive relationship between self-regulation and foreign language achievement (r= .319 p >.01), self-esteem and foreign language achievement (r= .404 p >.01), and attitude and foreign language achievement (r=.425 p >.01). Moreover, when self-regulation, self-esteem and attitude came together, a statistically significant positive relationship with foreign language success was observed (r= .540 p >.01). Self-regulation, self-esteem and attitude in relation to academic success have been analyzed together for the first time in this study.

Index Terms—attitude, self-regulation, self-esteem, foreign language learning

I. INTRODUCTION

With the increasing importance given to individual differences, the field of psychology has witnessed a deal of great interest recently. Humanistic approaches regard individual differences as an indispensable part of interpreting individuals' behaviors. It is a widely known truth that there are lots of underlying reasons behind human behaviors. In order to understand these reasons, individual differences should not be underestimated. Psychology's findings on individual differences have introduced many concepts to the field. Among these concepts are self-esteem, self-regulation and attitude. These concepts, the importance of which has recently been recognized in education may also be among the determinants of foreign language learning.

Self-regulation, self-esteem and attitude are closely related to cognitively based motivations which explain the reasons of human behaviors. However, the effect of social incentives can't be denied on the constructs mentioned above. These concepts which are contributed to learning with the increase of interest in learner psychology in education may account for the individual differences in learning. They also explain why some learners are more successful than others in the same learning environment.

Self-regulated learning refers to "the self-directive processes and self-beliefs that enable learners to transform their mental abilities, such as verbal aptitude, into an academic performance skill, such as writing" (Zimmerman, 2008, p.1-30). Social Cognitive Theory emphasis the importance of self-regulation because it functions as a bridge between external factors and internal actions of an individual (Bandura, 1989). Self-regulation capability an individual has helps him to adapt himself to the environment with his inner potential. An individual's degree of self-regulation affects how he interacts with external area, because self-regulation occurs as a result of reciprocal interaction between personal (covert), environmental and behavioral determinants (Bandura, 1977). Most researchers who are seeking to find the relationship between self-regulation and success have found a positive relationship (Zimmerman& Martinez-Pons, 1986; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990; Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994; Purdie & Hattie, 1996; Perry and Van de Kamp, 2000; Dignath & Buttner, 2008; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2008; Denham, Bassett, Way, Mincic, Zinsser & Graling, 2012; Cleary & Platten, 2013).

Self-esteem is defined as how valuable an individual finds himself (Malbi & Reasoner, 2000; Bosson, Brown, Zeigler-Hill & Swan, 2003; Korkmaz, 2007). Self-esteem has received great interest among researchers investigating personality development. Nearly all of them agree that self-esteem is an important factor which explains reasons of human behaviors (Beck, 1974; French, Story & Perry, 1995; Brown & Marshall, 2002). Although the relationship between self-esteem and achievement has been concern of much research, there are not many studies investigating self-esteem in relation to foreign language learning. Most of the studies have indicated a positive relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement (Rosenberg, 1965; Purkey's, 1970; Kugle, Clements and Powell, 1983; Güngör, 1989; Nurmi and Pulliainen, 1991; Robinson and Tayler, 1991; 1996).

Attitudes toward learning are defined as "emotional precursors of the initiation of learning behavior (Kormos, Kiddle & Csizér, 2011). Attitude is both input and output according to Garner's socio-educational model. Gardner (1985) strongly stresses the importance of motivation and attitude in language learning. He suggests that two classes of attitudes increase one's motivation to learn a foreign language:
  - Integrativeness
  - Attitudes toward learning situation.

Foreign language research indicates that motivation and attitude are closely related (Dörnyei, 2001; Masgoret &Garner; 2003; Bernaus, Masgoret, Gardner & Reyes, 2004). Gardner defines motivation as "a combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes towards the learning the language" (Williams and Burden, 1997). As closely linked to motivation, language attitude has an undeniable effect on foreign language achievement (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; Prodromou, 1992; Lightbown & Spada, 1993; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003; Mejias and Carlson, 2003; Brantmeier, 2005; Huguet, Lapresta & Madariaga, 2008; Abidin, Pour-Mohammadi & Alzwari, 2012).

Self-regulation, self-esteem and attitude were the foci of the present study because they drew great attention in much research. The relationship between these concepts and foreign language success was the main point of this research. This starting point of the study led these research questions:
  1. Is there a relationship between self-regulation and foreign language achievement?
  2. To what extent does self-regulation predict foreign language achievement?
  3. Is there a relationship between self-esteem and foreign language achievement?
  4. To what extent does self-esteem predict foreign language achievement?
  5. Is there a relationship between attitude and foreign language achievement?
  6. To what extent does attitude predict foreign language achievement?
  7. Is there a positive relationship between self-regulation, self-esteem, positive attitudes and foreign language achievement?

II. METHODOLOGY

Participants

383 volunteers out of 1867 preparatory level students from Gaziantep University Higher School of Foreign Languages participated in this study in 2011-2012 academic year. Most of the students (49.6%) are aged between 17-19. 59% of the learners were male. Majority of them graduated from public high schools (40%). Participants in this study were from three different proficiency levels. More than half the students (58%) have been studying English for more than four years.

Procedure

Data collection method of the study was questionnaire. The questionnaire used in this study consisted of three different questionnaires each of which separately proved reliability and validity. These three questionnaires were adapted and modified according to the aim of the present study. The self-esteem questionnaire was adapted from Rosenberg's self-esteem questionnaire which originally consists of ten items and the reliability was originally found as .92 (Rosenberg, 1965). Self-regulation part of the questionnaire was adapted from Brown, Miller, & Lawendowski (1999). Self-regulation questionnaire was originally proved reliability value of .94. The self-regulation questionnaire which had originally 63 items was modified and reduced to 16 items. While choosing a questionnaire to measure language attitudes, it was important to choose a questionnaire which was previously designed for Turkish students because the present study is also with Turkish students. With this aim, in the present study language attitude was measured through an adapted questionnaire by Karahan (2007). Karahan also adapted this questionnaire from Buschenhofen (1998) to measure attitudes of learners towards foreign language in Turkish context. The final form of the questionnaire included 42 items and the reliability of the new questionnaire was.849. Lastly, students end of year scores including midterm, final results and teacher evaluations were used in order to measure academic success of students.

III. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The effect of age, proficiency level, gender and duration of students' learning English on self-regulation, self-esteem and attitude of them was searched. Among these factors only gender factor was found to affect attitude.

According to Levene's test results, female students showed more positive attitudes toward foreign language learning than male counterparts.

TABLE 1
EFFECT OF GENDER ON ATTITUDE

Attitude	Levene's Test for Equality of variances		t-test for equality of means		
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	.674	.412	-2.58	381	.01
Equal variances not assumed			-2.58	335.72	.01

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
Attitude	Male	226	56.84	8.09	.54
	Female	157	38.19	59.01	.65

The result of the table is parallel with other studies which report that girls have more positive approach towards foreign language than boys (Bacon & Finneman, 1992; Kobayashi, 2002; Kormos & Csizér, 2008; Shams, 2008; Elkılıç, Akalın & Salman, 2010; Soku, Simpeh & Osafa-Adu, 2011; Abidin, Pour-Mohammadi & Alzwari, 2012).

According to the table 2, there is positive relationship between self-regulation and academic success at medium degree (r= .319 p> .01). Furthermore, the positive relationship between self-regulation and achievement indicates that the increase in self-regulation affects the increase in foreign language success. Many other studies also confirm that there is a strong relationship between self-regulation and achievement (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Pintrich, 2000; Howse, Lange, Farran & Boyles, 2003; Ee, Moore & Atputhasamy, 2003; Nota, Soresi & Zimmerman, 2004; Senko & Harackiewicz, 2005; McClelland & Wanless, 2012).

TABLE 2
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-REGULATION AND FLA

		Self-regulation	Foreign language achievement
Self-regulation	Pearson Correlation	1	.319**
	Sig. (2- tailed)		.000
	N	383	383
Foreign language achievement	Pearson Correlation	.319**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	383	383

Regression model summary of self-regulation and success

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of The estimate
1	.319 (a)	.10	.10	14.83

a. Predictors: (Constant) Self-regulation

ANOVA[b]

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	9335.05	1	9535.05	43.30	.000a
Residual	83893.60	381	220.19		
Total	93428.66	382			

a.Predictors (constant), self regulation
b. Dependent variable: foreign language achievement

COEFFICIENTSA

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	24.68	5.99		4.11	.000
Self regulation	.68	.10	.319	6.58	.000

a. Dependent Variable: foreign language achievement

Regression model summary also indicates that self-regulation is a meaningful predictor of foreign language achievement (R=.319, R^2 =.10, F= 43.30). Moreover, self-regulation explains 10% of academic success in foreign language achievement.

According to the table 3, there is a positive relationship between self-esteem and foreign language success in medium strength of association (r= .404 p> .01). This result is consistent with many studies (Hassan, 2001; Hayati & Ostadian, 2008; Bagheri & Faghih, 2012; Liu, 2012). Moreover, the table shows that self-esteem accounts for the 16 % of academic success of the students in this study. In other words, self-esteem predicts foreign language achievement to a significant extent.

TABLE 3
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-ESTEEM AND FLA

		Self-esteem	Foreign language Achievement
Self-esteem	Pearson Correlation	1	.404**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	383	383
Foreign Language Achievement	Pearson Correlation	.404 **	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	383	383

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Regression model summary of self-esteem and success

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of The estimate
1	.404a	.16	.16	14.32

a. Predictors: (Constant) Self-esteem

ANOVA[b]

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	15223.75	1	15223.75	74.16	.000a
Residual	78204.90	381	205.26		
Total	93428.66	382			

a.Predictors (constant), self esteem
b. Dependent variable: foreign language achievement

COEFFICIENTSA

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	27.32	4.30		6.35	.000
Self esteem	.97	.11	.404	8.61	.000

a. Dependent Variable: foreign language achievement

In Table 4, it is seen that attitude has a mildly positive correlation with academic success like other variables in this study (r= .425 p> .01). Many other studies also reached the same results (Trylong, 1987; Kuhlemeier, van den Bergh& Melse, 1996; Onwuegbuzie, Bailey & Daley, 2000; İnal, Evin & Saracaloğlu, 2005; Ushida, 2005; Petrides, 2006; Youssef, 2012). It may be interpreted that the more positive attitudes students have toward language learning, the more they are successful at foreign language learning. Regression model summary shows that 18% of the achievement is explained by attitudes toward language. In other words, attitude is a good predictor of foreign language achievement (R=.425, R^2 =.18, F= 83.86).

TABLE 4
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ATTITUDE AND FLA

		Attitude	Foreign language achievement
Attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	.425**
	Sig. (2- tailed)		.000
	N	383	383
Foreign Language Achievement	Pearson Correlation	.425**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	383	383

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Regression model summary of attitude and success

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of The estimate
1	.425a	.18	.17	14.17

a. Predictors: (Constant) attitude

ANOVA[b]

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	16854.87	1	16854.87	83.86	.000a
Residual	76573.78	381	200.98		
Total	93428.66	382			

a.Predictors (constant), attitude
b. Dependent variable: foreign language achievement

COEFFICIENTSA

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	16.78	5.19		3.23	.001
Attitude	.81	.08	.425	9.15	.000

a. Dependent Variable: foreign language achievement

According to the table 5, all constructs of the study has positive relation among them.

There is a mid positive correlation between self-regulation and self-esteem (r= .541 p> .01). The correlation between them has the highest correlation coefficient of all the variables in the study. This positive relationship is also confirmed by Crocker, Brook, Niiya and Villacorat, (2006). Self-regulation is also correlated with attitude positively, but this relationship is at low level (r= .258 p > .01). There is a low positive relationship between self-esteem and attitude, too (r =.188 p > .01). In the present study self-regulation, self-esteem and attitude affected achievement and each other positively. According to the multiple regression model of summary, there is a mid positive relationship between self-esteem, self-regulation, language learning attitude and academic success (r= .540 p> .01). It means that academic success at foreign language is not independent from self-esteem, self-regulation and language attitude of students. In other words, self-esteem, self-regulation and language attitude may be used while predicting students' success.

The table also reveals that self-regulation, self-esteem and attitude account for 29% of foreign language achievement.

TABLE 5
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-REGULATION, SELF-ESTEEM AND ATTITUDE

		Self regulation	Self esteem	Attitude
Self regulation	Pearson Correlation	1	.541**	.258**
	Sig. (2- tailed)		.000	.000
	N	383	383	383
Self esteem	Pearson Correlation	.541**	1	.188**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	383	383	383
Attitude	Pearson Correlation	.258**	.188*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	383	383	383

Multiple regression model summary of self-esteem, self-regulation, attitude and foreign language achievement

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of The estimate
1	.540a	.29	.28	13.21

a. Predictors: (Constant) self-esteem, self-regulation and attitude

ANOVA[b]

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	27289.69	3	9096.56	52.12	.000a
Residual	66138.96	379	174.50		
Total	93428.66	382			

a.Predictors (constant),self-regulation, self-esteem, attitude
b. Dependent variable: foreign language achievement

COEFFICIENTSA

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	-10.40	6.49		-1.60	.110
Self-regulation	.13	.11	.06	1.24	.216
Self esteem	.73	.12	.30	5.87	.000
Attitude	.67	.08	.35	7.83	.000

a. Dependent Variable: foreign language achievement

IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The uniqueness of the present research lies in examining the relationship between self-regulation, self-esteem, attitude and foreign language achievement. The study shows that there is a meaningful positive correlation between self-regulation and success, self-esteem and success, attitude and success. In addition, there is a positive relationship between self-esteem and self-regulation, self-esteem and attitude, self-regulation and attitude. Moreover, when these constructs come together, they contribute to foreign language achievement significantly.

The positive relationship between self-esteem, self-regulation, and language attitude gives important clues for foreign language classrooms. Educators should be aware of that, thus take measures. They can plan their educational activities by promoting learners' self-regulation, self-esteem and attitude. Teachers can also encourage students' self-esteem and self-regulation in the class and outside the class. They can affect students' attitudes toward learning a foreign language by being good models of the target language. Not only being competent at teaching methods and techniques but also knowing learners' psychologically readiness and needs do improve foreign language teaching. Moreover, the present study suggests pedagogical implications for teacher trainers. Teacher training curriculum, in-service teacher training programs, seminars and webinars can be designed and implemented so as to help teachers to develop their students' self-esteem, self-regulation and attitude toward language. Furthermore, these programs need to aim to promote higher self-esteem, self-regulation and positive attitudes toward language learning in teachers themselves. Teachers who are

with high self-esteem, self-regulation capacity and positive attitudes can be more fruitful for their learners, and help their learners to improve self-esteem, self-regulation and adopt positive attitudes toward language learning.

<div align="center">REFERENCES</div>

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