

EXPLORING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SELF-REGULATED ENGLISH LEARNERS IN A COMMUNITY LEARNING HUB

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Abstract: *This study aims to determine the extent to which these interactive methods enhance students' self-regulated learning abilities and contribute to their overall language acquisition in a collaborative setting. This study followed (Johnson and Christensen, 2004) qualitative and descriptive methods to enable a deep exploration of the research participants. Based on the findings regarding the implementation of Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) in vocabulary and speaking lessons, several key points can be discussed. First, the observation data confirms that the teacher followed the proper phases of the SRL cycle as proposed by Zimmerman (2002). During the self-introduction and vocabulary sessions, the teacher did not merely deliver content; instead, he guided students through the "forethought" phase by using brainstorming to help them set their learning goals. Furthermore, the teacher utilized Socratic questioning to encourage students to reflect on their own performance. This approach aligns with Zimmerman's (2000) theory, which suggests that self-regulation occurs when learners transform their mental abilities into academic skills through a proactive cycle of planning, performing, and reflecting.*

Keywords: *Self-Regulated Learning (SRL), Vocabulary, community learning hub*

INTRODUCTION

English language proficiency serves as an essential gateway to the global arena, facilitating opportunities in business, education, and professional development. At its core, mastering vocabulary remains the critical foundation for comprehension and expression, especially for second language learners (Hadi, 2017). However, successful acquisition requires more than just exposure to words; it demands Self-Regulated Learning (SRL)—a process where students take control of their own learning by managing cognitive and motivational strategies (Zimmerman, 1989).

Previous studies have extensively documented the general benefits of SRL in improving academic achievement and writing skills. Many of these researches, however, primarily report quantitative correlations or focus on autonomous digital tools, often overlooking the role of direct pedagogical interventions in social settings. This creates a significant gap in understanding how specific, interactive teaching techniques can actively trigger the SRL phases—forethought, performance, and self-reflection—within a classroom environment.

This research addresses this gap by investigating the direct pedagogical implications of brainstorming and the Socratic method at the Community Learning Hub in Malaysia. While social contexts are recognized as influential, the theoretical interpretation of how these contexts foster SRL behaviors remains diverse and under-explored. Unlike earlier studies that focus on general improvements, this study contributes methodologically by utilizing a qualitative approach to assess how these two verbal-based methods promote critical thinking and oral language production.

By integrating brainstorming to stimulate the "forethought" phase and Socratic questioning to facilitate "self-reflection," this approach enables students to identify logical errors through guided dialogue. Therefore, this study aims to determine the extent to which these interactive methods enhance students' self-regulated learning abilities and contribute to their overall language acquisition in a collaborative setting.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The framework of Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) serves as the primary theoretical foundation for understanding how students proactively manage their educational experiences. According to Zimmerman (1989), SRL is not a static mental trait but rather a self-directive process through which learners transform their mental abilities into academic skills by activating cognitions, affects, and behaviors systematically oriented toward personal goals. This process was further conceptualized into a cyclical model consisting of three interconnected phases: *forethought*, *performance*, and *self-reflection* (Zimmerman, 2000; 2002). The significance of SRL in second language acquisition is emphasized by Hadi (2017) and Fathi et al. (2024), who argue that self-regulation is essential for learners to navigate the complexities of vocabulary mastery and spontaneous oral production.

A critical pedagogical strategy that facilitates the initial “forethought” phase of this cycle is brainstorming. As a pre-task activity, brainstorming acts as a catalyst for creative thinking and the activation of prior knowledge without the immediate pressure of formal assessment. Al-Khatib (2012) explains that in oral language contexts, brainstorming allows students to organize their thoughts and reduce the cognitive load before engaging in speech. Furthermore, Rahmani (2024) suggests that collaborative brainstorming encourages students to set specific linguistic goals and enhances their self-efficacy, which provides the motivational impetus necessary for the planning stage of the SRL cycle.

Following the planning phase, the transition to active execution and monitoring can be effectively supported through the Socratic method. This form of cooperative argumentative dialogue compels students to monitor their logic and linguistic choices in real-time. Within the SRL cycle, Socratic questioning plays a vital role in both the “performance” and “self-reflection” phases. Research by Yang et al. (2021) demonstrates that guided Socratic dialogue enables learners to identify logical inconsistencies in their speech and encourages autonomous self-correction. By prompting learners with analytical “how” and “why” questions, the teacher moves students from passive reception to active self-observation, a hallmark of highly regulated learners (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011).

The integration of brainstorming and the Socratic method creates an interactive pedagogical environment that is particularly suited for developing oral communication skills. Yengkopiong (2025) highlights that such verbal-based techniques are often more effective than solo digital applications because they provide immediate social feedback and require active negotiation of meaning. This social dimension is especially relevant in unique settings like the Community Learning Hub in Malaysia. Luh et al. (2024) argue that while individual SRL is important, “co-regulated learning”—where regulation is fostered through social interaction—is essential in diverse learning communities. The Socratic method facilitates this by transforming the classroom into a community of inquiry where students are encouraged to reflect critically on their own and others’ contributions.

Despite the wealth of literature on the general correlations between SRL and academic achievement, there remains a notable scarcity of qualitative research exploring how specific pedagogical interventions facilitate the transition between

different SRL phases during oral tasks. Much of the existing research has focused on written achievement or automated digital tools, leaving a gap in our understanding of how brainstorming and Socratic questioning synergistically support real-time oral language production. Consequently, this study seeks to fill this gap by providing an in-depth analysis of how these interactive methods foster self-regulation strategies and overall language acquisition within a dynamic social learning context.

METHODOLOGY

In line with the purposes of the study, this study used (Johnson and Christensen, 2004) qualitative and descriptive methods to enable a deep exploration of the research participants. For this study, the best way to get the data on the process of self-regulated learning is qualitative method so that detailed information could be gathered. To understand how brainstorming and the Socratic method work in a real classroom, an in-depth qualitative approach will be used to enable data gathering from participants and to gain more specific results regarding their learning behaviors (Cresswell, 2008).

The proposed research was a case study exploring the experiences of both the teacher and the students at the Community Learning Hub in Malaysia regarding the use of brainstorming and Socratic questioning. It was expected that the perspectives of the participants could be reflected in an in-depth study (Gall et al, 2007) to bring detailed explanation and understanding of the group being studied (Ary et al, 2006). Part of the research would also be an action research in that the study stems from the educational problem of low student engagement and is conducted in such a way that it could provide an opportunity for practitioners to reflect on current practice, find solutions to the problems, and put changes from the findings into practice (Best and Kahn, 2003; Johnson and Christensen, 2004).

To collect data about the implementation of brainstorming and Socratic methods, the English teacher at the hub were interviewed. Worthen, BR et al (1997) suggest that when research tries to collect information about stakeholders' perspectives and concerns, an interview serves as a good way. The respondent for the interview were based on their direct involvement in the teaching process. In addition, classroom

observations and open-ended questionnaires were carried out to collect data on the experiences of the students. Worthen, BR et al (1997) suggest that gathering data from different sources is a good way to see how students actually apply self-regulated learning strategies. The participants for this study were the students actively participating in the oral language programs at the Community Learning Hub.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of self-regulated learning (SRL) strategies in teaching vocabularies was conducted on November 13th, 2025. The teacher implemented this approach during the vocabulary building session for the students at PPWNI Klang, Malaysia. To present the findings of how self-regulated learning was applied, the researcher used the data obtained from the classroom observation. The followings were the findings of the implementation of self-regulated learning strategies during the session.

a. Pre-Teaching Activity

The session was conducted on Thursday, Nov 13th, 2025. The English material taught by the teacher in this meeting was self-introduction to build basic vocabulary. The teacher started the class by greeting the students and then asked the class leader to lead the prayer together. After checking the students' attendance, the teacher asked the students to introduce themselves by mentioning their names, hobbies, and favorite food. This activity was designed to encourage students to plan their words, which relates to the forethought phase of self-regulated learning. Some students then started to share their personal information in front of the class. In this activity, the students were allowed to use some Bahasa when they found it difficult to mention certain hobbies or foods in English.

b. While-Teaching Activity

In the main-teaching activity, the teacher started to introduce some vocabulary and phrases for self-introduction through a brainstorming session. The teacher wrote the word "Hobby" on the whiteboard and asked the students to mention any words related to it. The teacher said "playing" and performed a gesture of playing football. The teacher then asked the students to mention other activities they like to do. When a student said "cooking," the teacher asked the whole class to repeat the word together. Next, the

teacher wrote “Favorite Food” and used the same brainstorming technique, encouraging students to list various traditional and modern foods. This activity helped students activate their prior knowledge, which is the forethought phase of self-regulated learning.

After ensuring the students had enough vocabulary, the teacher introduced the Socratic method to help students monitor their own speaking logic. The teacher asked, “Why is this your favorite hobby?” and “How often do you do it?” Instead of giving the answers, the teacher used these questions to guide the students to fix their own sentences. For example, when a student made a mistake in grammar, the teacher asked a prompting question until the student could self-correct. This process encouraged self-observation and self-control, which are parts of the SRL performance phase. The way the teacher introduced these dialogues was similar to the previous brainstorming session, where students were encouraged to think critically before speaking.

The students looked very excited when they were able to find the right English words for their personal interests. They were also enthusiastic in responding to the teacher’s Socratic questions. They looked satisfied when they could successfully correct their own mistakes through the teacher’s guidance. After practicing the dialogue, the teacher started to explain the English rules for simple self-introduction sentences. The teacher told the students that to talk about hobbies, they could use the pattern “My hobby is...” or “I like...” followed by a noun or a verb-ing.

After discussing the sentence structures, the teacher then invited the students to play a “Vocabulary Match” game. The teacher asked the students to make four groups. Next, the teacher gave a list of hobbies and food descriptions to each group. After that, one representative from each group came forward to describe a hobby using the vocabulary they had learned, while other groups had to guess the hobby. This collaborative activity allowed students to reflect on their learning and practice their oral production together.

b. Post-Teaching Activity

In the post-teaching activity, the teacher invited the students to review the vocabulary and phrases they had learned. To encourage the self-reflection phase of self-regulated learning, the teacher asked several students to evaluate their own speaking performance and identify which words they found most difficult to remember. The teacher also asked the students to mention again some vocabulary related to hobbies and favorite foods that they had practiced during the Socratic dialogue. Finally, the teacher gave a follow-up task to the students. He asked them to create a short written self-introduction at home and to list five new vocabulary words they wanted to master for the next meeting to help them monitor their own learning progress.

THE STUDENTS' RESPONSE TOWARD LEARNING VOCABULARIES USING SRL

Another objective of this research was to examine how students perceived the application of self-regulated learning (SRL) strategies in their vocabulary lessons. To understand their personal opinions and experiences, the researcher collected feedback through an open-ended questionnaire. The data presented below summarizes the participants' reactions and their attitudes toward the use of brainstorming and Socratic questioning in improving their vocabulary mastery.

The implementation of Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) is closely linked to the teacher's ability to facilitate critical thinking and social interaction in the classroom. Based on the data regarding student enjoyment in a collaborative setting, it shows that 50% of students were very excited about the social interaction provided, 38% were excited, 6% were hesitant, and 6% were not excited. Regarding the use of Socratic questioning to trigger critical thinking, 31% of students strongly agreed that this method helped them think more deeply, 50% agreed, 13% were hesitant, and 6% disagreed.

The next part of the data focuses on the "forethought" phase through brainstorming. The data indicates that 38% of students felt that brainstorming very often helped them plan their vocabulary before speaking, 44% felt it was often helpful, 12% were hesitant, and 6% did not feel it helped their planning. Meanwhile, regarding the students' ability to perform self-correction during the Socratic dialogue, 19% were very confident in correcting their own mistakes, 63% felt confident, 12% were hesitant, and 6% did not feel confident in self-correcting.

Dealing with whether the SRL approach helped students become more active in vocabulary building, the data showed that 13% strongly agreed that it increased their participation, 81% agreed, 0% were hesitant, and 6% disagreed. Furthermore, the

questionnaire revealed that 25% of students were very excited to manage their own learning process (SRL), 63% were excited, 6% were hesitant, and 6% were not excited. The final question regarding overall vocabulary improvement showed that 38% of students strongly agreed that this method improved their vocabulary mastery, 56% agreed, 0% were hesitant, and 6% disagreed.

The questionnaire results prove that the "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" responses were dominant, with "Agree" reaching 81% and "Strongly Agree" reaching 50% in certain categories. This indicates that from questions one to ten, most students showed great enthusiasm in following the vocabulary activities through the SRL framework. On the other hand, a small minority of about 6% expressed disagreement.

To get more comprehensive information about students' responses to learning vocabulary using SRL, the researcher conducted interviews with three students at the Community Learning Hub (PPWNI) Klang, Malaysia. The following are the results of the interviews:

Based on the interviews, it appears that SRL strategies play an important role in teaching vocabulary. This approach created a more reflective and proactive classroom atmosphere. The strength of the Socratic method in making students more aware of their learning can be seen from the interview with Interviewee 1.

"I think it's very helpful because I don't just memorize words, but I understand how to use them through the teacher's questions. It makes me happy to think more"

"Yes, it does. Because now I know how to plan my own study and I feel more confident when I speak"

"Yes, it does. It helps me collect my thoughts first, so I'm not afraid to say the wrong words"

"It helps me realize my own mistakes. Instead of just being told I'm wrong, I get to fix it myself"

“Sometimes it's hard because the teacher asks "why" too much, and I get confused.”

“To be honest, I feel a bit sleepy when I have to think too hard by myself. I prefer if the teacher just gives me the meaning of the words directly.”

The interview data above shows that while the SRL method was effective for most, it did not help every student engage happily. For a student like Interviewee 3, the method felt overwhelming, leading to a lack of attention and a feeling of sleepiness because they weren't used to the "thinking-heavy" nature of the Socratic method.

Based on the findings regarding the implementation of Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) in vocabulary and speaking lessons, several key points can be discussed. First, the observation data confirms that the teacher followed the proper phases of the SRL cycle as proposed by Zimmerman (2002). During the self-introduction and vocabulary sessions, the teacher did not merely deliver content; instead, he guided students through the "forethought" phase by using brainstorming to help them set their learning goals. Furthermore, the teacher utilized Socratic questioning to encourage students to reflect on their own performance. This approach aligns with Zimmerman's (2000) theory, which suggests that self-regulation occurs when learners transform their mental abilities into academic skills through a proactive cycle of planning, performing, and reflecting.

The observation also highlighted the effectiveness of the Socratic method in helping students monitor their oral production. Rather than providing immediate corrections, the teacher used analytical "how" and "why" questions to prompt students to think critically. This technique allowed students to identify their own linguistic errors and engage in autonomous self-correction. This finding is consistent with research by Yang et al. (2021), which demonstrates that Socratic dialogue enhances critical thinking and helps students identify logical inconsistencies in their speech. Additionally, the brainstorming session at the beginning of the class proved essential in activating prior knowledge and reducing the students' cognitive load, making them feel better prepared for the speaking tasks (Al-Khatib, 2012). Overall, the instructional process was successfully implemented according to the SRL framework.

To create a more dynamic and less stressful classroom, the teacher integrated a "Vocabulary Match" game within a collaborative setting. In this activity, students worked together to describe hobbies while their peers guessed the correct terms. The

teacher's role shifted from a traditional lecturer to a facilitator of "co-regulated learning," where regulation is supported through social interaction. This collaborative dimension is crucial for reducing learner anxiety. As argued by Luh et al. (2024), social feedback within a learning community helps students observe their own progress in a supportive environment. This interactive method ensured that the classroom atmosphere remained fun and productive, which is a key element in maintaining student persistence in language learning.

Finally, the students' enthusiasm was notably high throughout the implementation of this SRL-based approach. The participants appeared more attracted to the learning activities because they felt a sense of control over their own progress, especially during the challenging Socratic questioning sessions. This observation supports Rahmani's (2024) view that collaborative planning and brainstorming can significantly boost students' self-efficacy and motivation. Rather than being passive recipients of information, the students were actively involved in producing language and evaluating their own growth. In summary, the SRL approach successfully fostered a reflective and active learning environment, ultimately increasing students' interest and independence in mastering English vocabulary. Based on the findings from the questionnaire and interview data, several key points regarding students' responses to Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) in vocabulary lessons can be discussed.

First, the questionnaire data indicated that the teacher's role as a facilitator was crucial in creating a positive learning environment. Most students expressed that they felt highly motivated when the teacher used interactive methods like brainstorming and guided dialogue. This was supported by the interview results, where one student mentioned that the collaborative setting made them feel more involved and prevented them from feeling bored or disconnected during the lesson. The data suggests that students generally respond better to a teacher who encourages them to take charge of their own learning rather than just delivering a lecture. In this context, the SRL framework served as an engaging pedagogical approach that made the vocabulary-building process feel more dynamic and purposeful.

Furthermore, the questionnaire findings highlighted that implementing SRL strategies significantly increased student participation. Most participants agreed that

being involved in the "forethought" phase—specifically through brainstorming—made them more active in class. Interview data reinforced this, with students noting that the reason they enjoyed this method was that it allowed them to contribute their own ideas, making the learning process feel less repetitive. Instead of being passive receivers of information, students felt empowered to think critically.

The students also reported a high level of excitement when participating in Socratic questioning. This was proven by the questionnaire results, which showed that a large number of students enjoyed the challenge of identifying their own mistakes. During the interviews, students shared that they felt a sense of satisfaction when they could successfully self-correct through the teacher's prompts. Unlike traditional methods where they simply "sit and listen," this approach required them to actively negotiate meaning and reflect on their speech.

However, regarding the impact on overall language proficiency, the results were more varied. While the majority of students agreed that the method helped them remember new words more effectively, a small group of students felt that the "thinking-heavy" nature of the Socratic method was challenging and did not immediately improve their speaking confidence. In conclusion, while the SRL approach was highly successful in fostering a happy, active, and reflective classroom atmosphere at the Community Learning Hub, it may require more time and consistency to ensure that all students—especially those who prefer direct instruction—can fully see the benefits in their speaking performance.

CONCLUSION

English language proficiency serves as an essential gateway to the global arena, facilitating opportunities in business, education, and professional development. At its core, mastering vocabulary remains the critical foundation for comprehension and expression, especially for second language learners (Hadi, 2017). However, successful acquisition requires more than just exposure to words; it demands Self-Regulated Learning (SRL)—a process where students take control of their own learning by managing cognitive and motivational strategies (Zimmerman, 1989). Therefore, this study aims to determine the extent to which these interactive methods enhance students' self-regulated learning abilities and contribute to their overall language acquisition in a collaborative setting.

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