Original Article

Self-Regulated Language Learning Strategies and Task Engagement in Second Language Acquisition of Students in Public Secondary Schools

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Abstract

This study examined how self-regulated language learning strategies influence task engagement in additional language acquisition among junior high school students in public secondary schools in Tugbok District, Division of Davao City. Anchored on self-regulated learning, sociocultural perspectives, and student engagement models, the study used a quantitative descriptive-correlational design. Adapted survey questionnaires assessed self-regulated language learning strategies in terms of metacognitive, cognitive, meta-affective, meta-sociocultural-interactive, and sociocultural-interactive strategies, and task engagement in terms of behavioral, emotional, cognitive, agentic, and social engagement. Findings showed moderate overall use of self-regulated language learning strategies, with metacognitive strategies rated highest. Task engagement was also moderate overall, with behavioral engagement rated highest and agentic engagement lowest. Correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between self-regulated language learning strategies and task engagement. Regression results indicated that all strategy domains significantly predicted task engagement, with metacognitive strategies as the strongest predictor. The findings support explicit strategy instruction, guided reflection, emotionally supportive tasks, and socially interactive language activities.

Keywords: engagement, metacognition, regression, self-regulation, strategies

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1. Introduction

Task engagement has become a central construct in second language acquisition because it captures the extent to which learners invest attention, effort, emotion, initiative, and social participation in language tasks. Engagement is not a single behavior, nor is it limited to visible class participation. Contemporary engagement research treats it as a multidimensional construct composed of behavioral, emotional, cognitive, agentic, and social dimensions that operate together during instruction (Fredricks et al., 2004; Hiver et al., 2024; Reeve & Tseng, 2011). In language classrooms, these dimensions are especially important because second language acquisition depends not only on exposure to input but also on purposeful use, repeated practice, negotiation of meaning, feedback, and learner commitment. A student who completes activities may demonstrate behavioral engagement, but deeper engagement becomes evident when the student connects new language forms with prior knowledge, monitors comprehension, expresses preferences, asks for clarification, collaborates with peers, and persists despite communication difficulty.

The study of engagement in second language learning has expanded in response to the recognition that language tasks can succeed or fail depending on the quality of learner involvement. Hiver et al. (2024) showed that engagement research in language learning has grown rapidly but remains varied in its definitions and measurement practices. This is important for school contexts where students may comply with classroom tasks while still showing limited cognitive effort, low emotional investment, or weak initiative. Oga-Baldwin (2019) argued that engagement in language learning involves interrelated processes of action, thought, feeling, creation, and collaboration. Such a view aligns with task-based and communicative approaches because language development occurs when learners use language to make meaning, not merely when they memorize vocabulary or grammar rules. For junior high school students, task engagement is therefore a critical pathway through which classroom instruction becomes active language practice.

Self-regulated language learning strategies offer one explanation for why some learners engage more deeply than others. Self-regulated learners set goals, choose strategies, monitor progress, regulate emotions, seek assistance, and evaluate outcomes. Zimmerman (2002) described self-regulation as an active process through which learners guide their cognition, motivation, and behavior toward academic goals, while Oxford (2017) situated language learning strategies within self-regulation, context, agency, and learner autonomy. In second language acquisition, these strategies help students manage complex tasks such as reading texts, composing responses, speaking in front of classmates, and interacting in English despite anxiety or limited proficiency. The self-regulated foreign language learning strategy framework validated by Habok and Magyar (2018) provides a useful structure because it includes metacognitive, cognitive, meta-affective, meta-sociocultural-interactive, and sociocultural-interactive domains.

The relationship between self-regulation and engagement is theoretically strong. A learner who plans study time, monitors comprehension, uses mental strategies, controls anxiety, seeks cultural knowledge, and interacts with peers is more likely to maintain attention and effort during a task. Recent empirical work supports this link. Zare et al. (2024) found that self-regulated learning strategy use was closely related to task engagement in English as a foreign language contexts. Derakhshan and Zare (2024) further modeled the connection between self-regulated learning and task engagement through structural equation modeling, while Zare and Derakhshan (2024) validated a task engagement questionnaire that represented behavioral, emotional, cognitive, agentic, and social dimensions. These studies suggest that engagement can be strengthened when students receive structured opportunities to regulate how they learn, how they feel, and how they interact during language tasks.

The Philippine public secondary school context gives this issue practical importance. Students in junior high school often encounter English as a language of academic instruction, assessment, media, and future opportunity, yet their level of active use in class can vary widely. In resource-constrained classrooms, students may rely on teacher explanation, written exercises, and compliance with requirements, while fewer opportunities exist for sustained communication, peer support, learner choice, and reflective strategy use. Sociocultural theory helps explain why this matters: learning develops through mediated participation, interaction, scaffolding, and the use of cultural tools (Vygotsky, 1978). If language tasks remain teacher-centered or assessment-driven, students may not fully use the social and agentic pathways that promote language development. Conversely, when teachers design tasks that allow students to plan, collaborate, ask questions, seek feedback, and reflect on progress, strategy use and engagement can reinforce each other.

Despite the conceptual connection between self-regulated language learning strategies and task engagement, local empirical evidence remains limited, particularly among Grade 9 and Grade 10 students in public secondary schools. The present study addressed this gap by determining the levels of self-regulated language learning strategies and task engagement, examining the relationship between the two constructs, and identifying which strategy domains significantly influence task engagement. The focus on junior high school students is important because students at this level are expected to show stronger cognitive control, growing emotional awareness, and greater capacity for strategic learning than younger learners. Evidence from this group can guide teachers, school heads, and curriculum planners in the design of strategy-based and engagement-supportive second language instruction.

2. Methodology

This study used a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to examine the influence of self-regulated language learning strategies on task engagement in second language acquisition among junior high school students. The design was appropriate because the study sought to describe the level of each

construct, determine the strength and direction of the relationship between them, and identify the predictive contribution of specific strategy domains to task engagement. The study was conducted in public secondary schools in Tugbok District, Division of Davao City, during the 2025-2026 academic year. The respondents were 130 Grade 9 and Grade 10 students drawn from a population of 230 students. The sample size was determined through Slovin's formula with a 0.05 margin of error, and simple random sampling was used to provide each eligible student an equal chance of selection. The inclusion criteria covered students who were officially enrolled full time in regular junior high school classes and had sufficient exposure to second language instruction. Students with irregular attendance, those enrolled in special or alternative programs that did not follow the standard curriculum, and those on extended leave during the data collection period were excluded to reduce variation caused by inconsistent instructional exposure.

Data were collected through adapted standardized survey questionnaires. Self-regulated language learning strategies were measured through the Self-Regulated Foreign Language Learning Strategy Questionnaire developed and validated by Habok and Magyar (2018). The adapted instrument contained 34 items grouped into five domains: metacognitive, cognitive, meta-affective, meta-sociocultural-interactive, and sociocultural-interactive strategies. Task engagement was measured through the questionnaire developed and validated by Zare and Derakhshan (2024), which assessed behavioral, emotional, cognitive, agentic, and social engagement through 25 items. Both instruments used a five-point Likert response format ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Prior to full administration, the instruments were reviewed by three specialists in language education and educational research to check alignment, clarity, and relevance to the local junior high school context. A pilot test was conducted with 30 students who were not part of the final sample. The pilot reliability analysis yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .960 for the self-regulated language learning strategy scale and .935 for the task engagement scale, indicating high internal consistency for both measures.

The data collection procedure followed institutional and ethical requirements for research involving minors. Permission was secured from the graduate school, the relevant education authorities, and the participating schools. Parents or guardians provided informed consent, and student assent was obtained before participation. The respondents were informed that participation was voluntary, that they could withdraw without penalty, and that their responses would be used only for research purposes. The questionnaires were administered in coordination with school personnel to avoid disruption of regular classes. The researcher gave uniform instructions, clarified procedural questions without coaching responses, collected the completed forms, and checked them for completeness. No personally identifying information was attached to the encoded data. The responses were coded and stored securely, and access to the dataset was restricted to the researcher and authorized research personnel.

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive and inferential statistics. Means and standard deviations were used to summarize the levels of self-regulated language

learning strategies and task engagement, including their respective domains and item indicators. The descriptive levels followed the interpretive scale used in the study, in which higher means indicated more frequent or stronger manifestation of the measured behavior. Pearson product-moment correlation was used to determine the relationship between self-regulated language learning strategies and task engagement. Multiple linear regression was used to determine the extent to which metacognitive, cognitive, meta-affective, meta-sociocultural-interactive, and sociocultural-interactive strategies predicted task engagement. The level of significance was set at .05. The reported p-value of 0.000 in the statistical output was retained in the results tables and should be interpreted as $p < .001$.

3. Results

As shown in Tables 1, the overall mean for self-regulated language learning strategies was 3.38 with an overall standard deviation of 0.83, corresponding to a moderate descriptive level. Metacognitive strategies recorded the highest domain mean at 3.48 and were rated high, while sociocultural-interactive strategies recorded the lowest domain mean at 3.32 and were rated moderate. The remaining domains were rated moderate, with means of 3.35 for cognitive strategies, 3.36 for meta-affective strategies, and 3.38 for meta-sociocultural-interactive strategies.

Table 1. Summary of self-regulated language learning strategies among junior high school students.

Domain	SD	Mean	Descriptive Level
Metacognitive strategies	0.85	3.48	High
Cognitive strategies	0.85	3.35	Moderate
Meta-affective strategies	0.83	3.36	Moderate
Meta-sociocultural-interactive strategies	0.82	3.38	Moderate
Sociocultural-interactive strategies	0.80	3.32	Moderate
Overall	0.83	3.38	Moderate

As shown in Table 2, the overall mean for task engagement was 3.25 with an overall standard deviation of 0.81, corresponding to a moderate descriptive level. Behavioral engagement recorded the highest domain mean at 3.35. Agentic engagement recorded the lowest domain mean at 3.15. Emotional engagement, cognitive engagement, and social engagement were rated moderate, with means of 3.28, 3.27, and 3.22, respectively.

Table 2. Summary of task engagement in second language acquisition among junior high school students.

Domain	SD	Mean	Descriptive Level
Behavioral engagement	0.80	3.35	Moderate
Emotional engagement	0.80	3.28	Moderate
Cognitive engagement	0.80	3.27	Moderate
Agentic engagement	0.82	3.15	Moderate
Social engagement	0.82	3.22	Moderate
Overall	0.81	3.25	Moderate

Table 3 shows a positive correlation between self-regulated language learning strategies and task engagement, $r = 0.76$, $R^2 = 0.58$, $p = 0.000$. The reported degree of relationship was high, and the decision was to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 3. Correlation results.

Variables	r	p-value
Self-Regulated Language Learning Strategies	0.76	0.000
Task Engagement		

Table 4 shows that all five domains of self-regulated language learning strategies significantly influenced task engagement. Metacognitive strategies had the highest standardized coefficient, beta = 0.36, followed by cognitive strategies, beta = 0.28, meta-sociocultural-interactive strategies, beta = 0.25, meta-affective strategies, beta = 0.23, and sociocultural-interactive strategies, beta = 0.18.

Table 4. Regression results.

Predictor	B	SE	Beta	t	p-value
Constant	0.95	0.30		3.17	0.000
Metacognitive strategies	0.40	0.32	0.36	4.10	0.000
Cognitive strategies	0.30	0.31	0.28	3.50	0.001
Meta-affective strategies	0.25	0.29	0.23	3.25	0.000
Meta-sociocultural-interactive strategies	0.28	0.30	0.25	3.38	0.001
Sociocultural-interactive strategies	0.20	0.28	0.18	2.90	0.000

4. Discussion

The findings indicate that junior high school students demonstrated a moderate overall level of self-regulated language learning strategies, with metacognitive strategies rated high. This pattern suggests that the students more consistently used planning, monitoring, and attention-related strategies than cognitive, affective, cultural, and social interaction strategies. The result is coherent with the self-regulated learning view of Zimmerman (2002), which emphasizes the role of goal direction, self-

monitoring, and strategic control in academic performance. It is also aligned with Oxford's (2017) position that language learning strategies operate most effectively when students use them within a self-regulatory system rather than as isolated techniques. The relatively stronger metacognitive score may reflect the schooling practices of Grade 9 and Grade 10 students, who are already accustomed to planning study time, paying attention to teacher input, and linking new English content with prior knowledge. However, the moderate overall rating also indicates that strategy use had not yet reached a consistently high level across the wider range of domains.

The lower means in the sociocultural-interactive and cognitive domains are meaningful when interpreted through language learning strategy and sociocultural perspectives. Habok and Magyar (2018) validated self-regulated foreign language learning strategies as a multidimensional construct that includes not only metacognition but also cognitive processing, emotion regulation, cultural awareness, and interaction. In the present findings, students appeared more confident with internal regulation than with sustained social use of English, cultural exploration, or flexible cognitive manipulation of language. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory helps explain why this matters: language learning develops through mediated participation, scaffolding, and social interaction. If students use English mostly for school tasks but have fewer authentic opportunities to use it with peers, teachers, or broader cultural materials, their social and cultural strategy use may remain moderate. Elbaioumi Shaddad and Jember (2024) similarly reported that feedback-supported tasks and peer-work activities can enhance engagement, self-esteem, and language growth, which reinforces the need to connect strategy instruction with collaborative language use.

Task engagement was also moderate overall, with behavioral engagement as the highest domain and agentic engagement as the lowest. This means that students more often complied with visible task demands, such as focus, effort, and completion, than they proactively shaped the task through questions, preferences, or requests for support. The result fits the multidimensional framing of engagement by Fredricks et al. (2004), who distinguished visible participation from deeper emotional and cognitive investment. It also reflects the importance of agentic engagement proposed by Reeve and Tseng (2011), who argued that students contribute to instruction when they express needs, ask questions, and influence the learning process. In the context of second language acquisition, Zare and Derakhshan (2024) validated task engagement as a construct that includes behavioral, emotional, cognitive, agentic, and social dimensions. Therefore, a moderate overall level should not be read only as adequate participation; it also points to a need for tasks that invite student voice, peer dialogue, and reflective involvement.

The strong positive correlation between self-regulated language learning strategies and task engagement provides empirical support for the theoretical connection between strategic learning and active task participation. The reported $r = 0.76$ and $R^2 = 0.58$ indicate that students who reported stronger self-regulated strategy use also reported stronger task engagement. This pattern is consistent with the study of Zare et al. (2024), which found a relationship between self-regulated learning

strategy use and task engagement in an English as a foreign language context. Derakhshan and Zare (2024) likewise modeled self-regulated learning and task engagement as interconnected constructs, supporting the claim that learners who manage their own learning processes tend to show stronger participation in language tasks. The present result extends this relationship to junior high school learners in a Philippine public secondary school setting and shows that the connection is not limited to tertiary EFL learners. It also supports Hiver et al.'s (2024) call for engagement research that attends to both construct clarity and instructional context.

The regression results further clarify which strategy domains matter most for task engagement. Metacognitive strategies emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by cognitive, meta-sociocultural-interactive, meta-affective, and sociocultural-interactive strategies. This order indicates that planning, monitoring, and evaluation are central to engagement among the respondents. The finding is consistent with Zimmerman's (2002) self-regulated learning model because metacognitive control helps learners allocate effort, sustain attention, and adjust strategies when language tasks become difficult. Zhang (2024) also emphasized the role of self-regulated learning in contemporary language learning contexts, particularly as students must manage both internal learning processes and changing learning environments. In the present study, the metacognitive domain likely supported behavioral and cognitive engagement by helping students focus on task demands, manage time, and connect new content with prior knowledge.

Cognitive and meta-sociocultural-interactive strategies also significantly predicted task engagement, which suggests that engagement improves when students process language actively and connect learning with cultural or social meaning. Cognitive strategies such as identifying patterns, using new words in sentences, and avoiding word-for-word translation help students interact with language content more deeply. At the same time, meta-sociocultural-interactive strategies expand engagement beyond classroom compliance by prompting students to seek English exposure through media, peers, and cultural comparison. Pregoner et al. (2024) described language engagement as a process that combines action, thought, feeling, creation, and collaboration, while Nakamura et al. (2021) showed that learner choice can influence L2 task engagement. These perspectives help explain why engagement is likely to rise when students are not only told what to complete but are given strategy-rich and meaning-rich opportunities to use English in ways connected to their interests, identities, and social contexts.

Meta-affective and sociocultural-interactive strategies had smaller but still significant predictive effects. This result is important because language learning often involves anxiety, fear of mistakes, and reluctance to speak. A student who can relax before using English, encourage the self after difficulty, or practice with peers has a stronger chance of sustaining engagement. Al-Hoorie et al. (2025) noted that motivational processes in second language learning are strongly linked with autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which are all relevant to emotional and social participation. Oga-Baldwin and Nakata (2020) also emphasized the importance of

teacher practices that promote engagement among young language learners. The present findings therefore suggest that language teachers should not rely only on cognitive instruction. They should also create emotionally safe classrooms, normalize errors as part of learning, and design peer activities that make English use less threatening and more purposeful.

Taken together, the results support a pedagogy in which self-regulated strategy instruction and task engagement are treated as mutually reinforcing. Students need explicit guidance on how to plan, monitor, process, regulate emotion, seek help, and use English socially. At the same time, those strategies need tasks that make their use necessary and meaningful. A worksheet may invite behavioral compliance, but a collaborative problem, a short discussion, a peer-feedback task, or a reflective language journal can activate cognitive, emotional, agentic, and social engagement. The implication for public secondary school English instruction is that engagement should be designed, not merely expected. Teachers can strengthen task engagement by modeling strategy use, giving structured choices, using feedback cycles, encouraging student questions, and connecting English tasks with cultural materials and authentic communication.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that junior high school students in the selected public secondary schools demonstrated moderate overall self-regulated language learning strategies and moderate overall task engagement in second language acquisition. Metacognitive strategies were the strongest self-regulated strategy domain, while behavioral engagement was the strongest engagement dimension. The lowest domain results were found in sociocultural-interactive strategies and agentic engagement, which shows that students were more consistent in internal regulation and visible participation than in proactive, interactive, and socially mediated forms of language learning.

The findings also establish a strong positive relationship between self-regulated language learning strategies and task engagement. Students who reported higher levels of strategy use also reported higher levels of engagement in second language learning tasks. All five strategy domains significantly predicted task engagement, and metacognitive strategies had the strongest predictive contribution. These results confirm that planning, monitoring, cognitive processing, emotional regulation, cultural awareness, and social interaction are relevant to the quality of students' engagement in English learning tasks.

For classroom practice, the results point to the need for explicit self-regulated language learning instruction integrated into regular English lessons. Teachers may strengthen task engagement by guiding students to set language goals, monitor comprehension, use vocabulary and grammar strategies, manage anxiety, ask questions, seek feedback, collaborate with peers, and connect English learning with meaningful cultural and communicative contexts. Future studies may test intervention

models that combine self-regulated strategy instruction with task-based, peer-supported, and feedback-rich language activities across different grade levels and school contexts.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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