

From classroom to autonomy: A systematic literature review of self-regulated learning strategies in English language teaching

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ABSTRACT

Although self-regulated learning (SRL) has been widely discussed in language education, less is known about which classroom-based strategies most consistently translate into learner autonomy in predominantly face-to-face English Language Teaching (ELT) settings. Addressing this gap, this systematic literature review synthesizes empirical studies on SRL in traditional ELT classrooms and examines how these strategies support autonomous learning. Following PRISMA procedures, 56 studies indexed in Scopus and published between 2016 and 2025 were selected through database filtering, eligibility screening, and full-text review. The synthesis shows that many successful interventions were grounded in Zimmerman's cyclical SRL model, especially when teachers explicitly scaffolded goal-setting, monitoring, and reflection. Cognitive and metacognitive strategies, formative feedback, self- and peer-assessment, and autonomy-supportive motivational climates were repeatedly associated with stronger language performance and more self-directed learning. However, the effectiveness of SRL also depended on teacher assessment literacy, professional training, and classroom conditions. The review suggests that SRL integration in ELT is most effective when explicit strategy instruction is paired with reflective assessment and sustained teacher support, and it highlights the need for longitudinal, cross-cultural, and methodologically diverse future research.

Keywords: autonomy; cognitive and metacognitive strategies; English language teaching; formative assessment; self-regulated learning; structured instruction; teacher training

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INTRODUCTION

Self-regulated learning (SRL) has become a central construct in English language teaching (ELT) because it explains how learners plan, monitor, and evaluate their own progress in ways that can strengthen both language proficiency and learner autonomy. In classroom-based ELT, SRL is particularly important because it links everyday instructional practices such as goal setting, guided reflection, and strategy instruction with students' growing capacity to assume responsibility for learning. Earlier reviews and syntheses have confirmed the broader value of SRL and autonomy in language education, yet they have tended to examine the field either at a general level or across mixed

learning environments rather than concentrating on how SRL operates in predominantly face-to-face classrooms where teacher mediation remains highly visible (Chen, 2022; Chen et al., 2025; Kesuma et al., 2020).

Learner autonomy, while closely related to SRL, is not identical to it. Autonomy refers to learners' capacity to make informed decisions about learning goals, resources, strategies, and self-evaluation, whereas SRL explains the strategic processes through which such decisions are enacted and sustained. For that reason, autonomy in ELT is best understood not as mere independence from the teacher, but as the gradual development of strategic agency supported by classroom routines, feedback, and reflective practice. Studies in ELT have consistently shown that autonomy-supportive classrooms are associated with stronger engagement and language achievement, which makes the SRL-autonomy relationship an important basis for reviewing classroom practice (Orawiwatnakul & Wichadee, 2017; Yasmin & Sohail, 2018).

Within traditional classrooms, SRL becomes pedagogically meaningful when teachers deliberately structure opportunities for planning, monitoring, feedback use, and reflection. Classroom-based studies have shown that strategy instruction, reflective activities, and task-oriented pedagogies can improve language learning when they are embedded in teacher-guided routines rather than left to emerge incidentally (Hashim & Yusoff, 2020; Siswanto & Mbato, 2020; Babakhanova & Kazykhankyzy, 2024). Although frameworks such as the Video-Based Pedagogical Framework (VIDPEF) highlight reflection and active engagement, they are relevant to the present review only insofar as they illuminate SRL-related processes, especially guided reflection, metacognitive awareness, and autonomy support within instructional design (Yaşar, 2025).

At the same time, the literature remains fragmented. Prior work shows that SRL practices vary across contexts because of differences in resources, teacher preparation, curricular expectations, and the extent to which classroom instruction is supplemented by technology. Rather than treating Turkey, Tanzania, Vietnam, and China as isolated cases, the broader pattern is that technologically enriched settings often expand opportunities for monitoring and feedback, whereas resource-constrained settings place greater pressure on teacher expertise, scaffolding, and classroom routines to sustain SRL development (Araka et al., 2020; Barzani et al., 2021; Kipanda & Maro, 2024; Lan, 2024; Panadero, 2017; Rahman et al., 2023; Wahab et al., 2022; Zou et al., 2024). This pattern suggests the need for a focused synthesis of classroom-anchored SRL strategies that remain pedagogically viable even when digital mediation is limited or secondary.

Another gap concerns the distribution of SRL research across language skills and the limited number of reviews that center on classroom-based autonomy as the main interpretive outcome. Existing studies frequently report SRL benefits in writing, reading, and speaking through mechanisms such as peer assessment, metacognitive strategy instruction, and self-monitoring; by contrast, listening appears less frequently and often as part of broader metacognitive or assessment-oriented work rather than as a stand-alone autonomy construct (Fathi et al., 2017; Luthfiyyah et al., 2021; Taufiqulloh et al., 2018; Waluyo, 2018). Accordingly, this review asks three questions: which SRL strategies are most evident in traditional ELT classrooms, how do they contribute to learner autonomy, and which contextual or pedagogical conditions mediate their effectiveness? The study, therefore, synthesizes empirical research published between 2016 and 2025 to clarify what classroom SRL looks like, why it matters for autonomy, and where the field still requires stronger evidence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

SRL as a cyclical process in classroom ELT

Zimmerman's cyclical model remains the most useful theoretical point of departure for this review because it conceptualizes SRL as a recurring sequence of forethought, performance, and self-reflection through which learners set goals, regulate effort, monitor progress, and evaluate outcomes (Zimmerman, 2013). In classroom ELT, these phases are visible in concrete practices such as planning before a task, monitoring language use during performance, and reflecting on feedback after task completion. Recent ELT studies have continued to show that when these phases are made explicit

through instruction, students develop stronger metacognitive awareness and more purposeful strategy use (Li et al., 2018; Wong et al., 2018). For the present review, Zimmerman's framework functions not merely as background theory but as an analytic lens for identifying how different studies operationalize planning, monitoring, feedback use, and reflection in traditional classrooms.

Social mediation and scaffolding for autonomy

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory complements Zimmerman's (2013) model by explaining why SRL in classroom ELT is rarely an entirely solitary process. Through scaffolding within the Zone of Proximal Development, teachers and peers can mediate strategy use until learners are able to perform more independently (Vygotsky, 1978). This perspective is especially relevant to the present review because many of the included studies examine teacher guidance, peer assessment, collaborative routines, and scaffolded reflection rather than autonomous learning in isolation. In that sense, autonomy is treated here as socially developed strategic agency: learners become more self-regulated not by removing mediation, but by internalizing it over time through supported classroom participation (Kim, 2022; Vygotsky, 1978; Zimmerman, 2013).

Self-efficacy, motivation, and strategic engagement

Bandura's social cognitive theory and Pintrich's work on motivation and metacognition help explain why the same classroom strategy does not benefit all learners equally. From this perspective, self-efficacy, task value, and goal orientation shape whether learners are willing to initiate, sustain, and adapt SRL strategies during language learning (Bandura, 1986; Bai & Guo, 2019; Pintrich, 2004; Suratullah et al., 2023). This theoretical strand is central to the present review because it clarifies why affective and motivational variables repeatedly emerge alongside cognitive and metacognitive strategy use in ELT studies. When students believe they can succeed and understand the purpose of regulation, they are more likely to engage actively in planning, monitoring, and reflective adjustment.

Taken together, these frameworks guide the synthesis in two ways. First, they justify the thematic organization of the review around classroom practices that cultivate autonomy through planning, monitoring, feedback, motivation, and contextual support. Second, they provide criteria for interpreting methodological debates in the literature, including the balance between explicit and implicit strategy instruction and the ongoing difficulty of measuring autonomy consistently across studies (Dignath & Veenman, 2020; Hosseini & Safari, 2018; Karimi & Abdollahi, 2020; Kruit et al., 2018; Loonis et al., 2017; Stratton, 2023; Yenkimaleki & Heuven, 2019). In this revised framework, theory is therefore linked directly to the review questions and to the coding logic used to interpret the included studies.

METHOD

Search strategies

This study adopted a systematic literature review design because the purpose was to synthesize recurring patterns across empirical studies rather than evaluate a single intervention. The review focused on classroom-anchored ELT settings in which SRL was enacted primarily through teacher guidance, peer interaction, and face-to-face instructional routines. Scopus was selected as the sole database because of its broad coverage of peer-reviewed international scholarship and its consistent indexing of education and applied linguistics research. The review window began in 2016 to capture the most recent decade of SRL scholarship relevant to contemporary ELT practice and ended in December 2025 so that the analysis would rest on a complete publication year; studies from 2026 were not included because indexing for that year was still incomplete at the time the dataset was finalized.

The search strategy combined core SRL terms with ELT-related descriptors and topic refiners associated with classroom implementation. The primary keyword set targeted "self-regulated learning" or "SRL" together with "English language teaching" or "ELT". A broader supplementary string also included "self-regulation", "learner autonomy", and "self-directed learning" alongside the terms "skills", "assessment", and "strategies" because these words frequently index the practical

manifestations of SRL in language classrooms. Importantly, the publication years 2016–2025 were applied through Scopus filters rather than embedded as Boolean search terms. This approach improved methodological transparency and aligned the search procedure more closely with standard SLR practice.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Clearly defined inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to ensure methodological rigor and conceptual relevance. These criteria are presented in [Table 1](#). In the revised version, the boundary between traditional and digitally mediated contexts is specified more explicitly: studies were retained when classroom interaction remained the primary mode of instruction, even if limited digital tools were used as supplementary supports and excluded when online or hybrid delivery constituted the main instructional environment.

Table 1

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

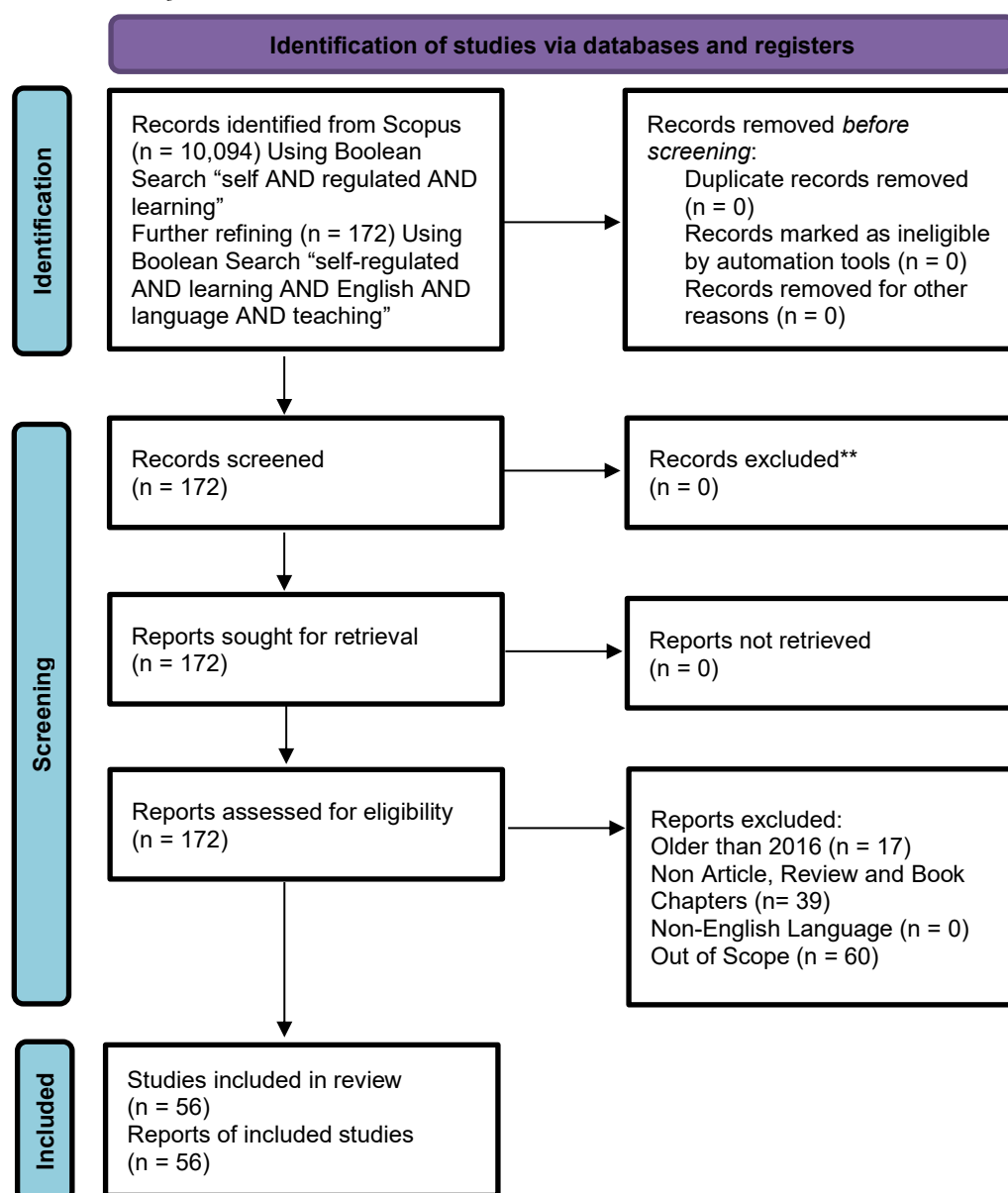
Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Empirical studies explicitly focused on self-regulated learning (SRL) within the domain of English language teaching (ELT).	Non-empirical studies, including purely theoretical discussions without practical classroom implementation.
Peer-reviewed publications ensuring academic credibility, methodological transparency, and research quality.	Studies conducted in fully online or hybrid environments in which digital platforms constituted the primary instructional mode.
Predominantly face-to-face or classroom-anchored settings; studies with minor digital support were retained only when teacher-guided in-class instruction remained central.	Articles addressing non-English teaching or educational contexts unrelated to ELT.
Studies explicitly addressing language skills such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening, or broader classroom SRL processes linked to those skills.	Studies published prior to 2016 in order to maintain a contemporary evidence base.
Articles published between 2016 and 2025 to ensure topical relevance while allowing a stable review window.	

Screening and selection process

The screening and selection process followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) procedure to enhance transparency and replicability ([Hajiabadi et al., 2023](#); [Hasibuan et al., 2023](#)). An initial broad scoping search in Scopus using the terms self, regulated, and learning produced 10,094 records; this preliminary count was used only to map the breadth of the field. Subsequent ELT-focused refinement, together with year, document-type, and relevance filtering, reduced the dataset to 172 records for screening. Titles, abstracts, and then full texts were reviewed against the inclusion and exclusion criteria. After the removal of publications outside the date range, non-article formats, and studies outside the scope of classroom-based ELT SRL, 56 studies were included in the final synthesis.

Figure 1

PRISMA Flowchart Showing the Preliminary Scoping Search, ELT-Focused Refinement, Eligibility Screening, and Final Inclusion of 56 Studies.



FINDINGS

Structured SRL instruction and strategy-based interventions (14 studies)

Across the 14 studies grouped in this theme, structured SRL instruction emerged as the clearest classroom mechanism for moving learners from teacher-supported participation toward greater autonomy. In traditional ELT settings, these interventions typically operationalized SRL through explicit strategy modelling, guided practice, self-monitoring routines, and post-task reflection. Rather than treating autonomy as a vague ideal, the studies linked it to observable classroom behaviours such as planning, self-evaluation, increased persistence, and more independent strategic choices during language tasks.

Studies such as [Tuero et al. \(2022\)](#) illustrate the efficacy of structured SRL programs incorporating [Zimmerman's \(2013\)](#) model within primary education contexts in Spain. Their 12-week intervention explicitly targeted goal-setting and self-monitoring strategies across language skills, significantly improving learners' academic performance with notable sustained effects at a three-

month follow-up ($d = 0.33$). This supports [Zimmerman's \(2013\)](#) hypothesis regarding cyclical SRL processes positively impacting long-term educational outcomes.

Similarly, the self-regulated strategy development (SRSD) model, extensively examined by [Leins et al. \(2017\)](#), underscores how structured interventions explicitly teaching writing strategies can substantially improve writing performance and advocacy skills, particularly for high school students with learning disabilities in the United States. The structured and repetitive application of SRSD strategies, including POW+TREE (Pick ideas, Organize notes, Write and say more; Topic sentence, Reasons, Explain reasons, Ending), facilitated significant qualitative improvements in argumentative writing. Moreover, [Teng \(2019\)](#) reinforced the effectiveness of SRSD through an intervention targeting elementary students' writing skills in China, showing a notable improvement in writing quality (Cohen's $d \approx 0.6$). This intervention integrated explicit teaching of text structure alongside SRL strategies, suggesting that structured and explicit instruction aligns effectively with Zimmerman's cyclical SRL phases, thus fostering learners' active engagement and strategic reflection during writing tasks. The benefits of structured SRL instruction extend beyond writing to reading comprehension. [Kavani and Amjadiparvar \(2018\)](#) report substantial gains in Iranian intermediate EFL learners' motivation, reading comprehension, and self-regulation through explicit metacognitive strategy instruction, emphasizing the broader cognitive benefits of SRL practices ($\eta^2 > 0.14$). Additionally, [Tam and Leung \(2019\)](#) found that structured literacy interventions significantly supported Hong Kong secondary students with dyslexia, resulting in measurable improvements in SRL scales, demonstrating SRL's adaptive versatility in addressing diverse learner needs.

Further exemplifying the versatility of structured SRL interventions, [Lin \(2024\)](#) investigated the impact of a structured academic-based intervention (ABI) combined with operational SRL training on Taiwanese high school students' oral presentation skills, concluding that the combined approach was superior to ABI alone ($\eta^2 = 0.31$). Such findings confirm the integrative role of explicit SRL strategies, in line with [Bandura's \(1986\)](#) social cognitive theory, particularly regarding learners' self-efficacy enhancement and the motivational factors influencing performance outcomes. The research by [Guo et al. \(2021\)](#) also demonstrates the effectiveness of structured, process-based SRL interventions targeting primary school students in Hong Kong. Their study notably improved learners' planning skills, a critical element of the forethought phase of [Zimmerman's \(2013\)](#) SRL cycle, resulting in substantial gains in writing performance ($\beta = .45$). These outcomes indicate the considerable potential of embedding structured SRL strategies within regular classroom curricula, positively influencing learners' strategic planning capabilities. Strategy-based SRL interventions have also been extended to diverse learner groups, including English Language Learners (ELL) with learning disabilities. [Jozwik and Cuenca-Carlino \(2020\)](#) described the effectiveness of explicit SRSD persuasive writing instruction in improving self-advocacy among rural US students, highlighting teachers' critical role in facilitating clear instructional guidance and personalized feedback.

Longer-term interventions further underscore the significance of duration for sustainable SRL outcomes. [Linde and Daniela \(2025\)](#) highlighted how a nine-month extensive reading circle intervention involving Latvian students substantially boosted motivation and SRL, suggesting prolonged exposure significantly enhances SRL strategy internalization and learner autonomy. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of structured SRL programs can vary due to contextual factors. [Zare et al. \(2025\)](#) reported short-term gains in the use of grammar strategies among Iranian undergraduates through corpus-based tasks. However, these effects diminished after 6 weeks, indicating that intervention duration and continued practice are critical to sustaining SRL gains. [Al Azzemy and Al Jamal \(2019\)](#) similarly noted gaps in the implementation of listening strategies among Kuwaiti teachers, suggesting that structured SRL interventions require sustained, context-specific professional development to maximize long-term impact. Moreover, the role of learner affect has been explored within structured SRL interventions, particularly through anxiety-reduction strategies. [Guo et al. \(2018\)](#) indicated that anxiety-reducing strategy training significantly improved Chinese undergraduates' self-regulatory behaviors and overall academic performance, reinforcing the emotional regulation aspect inherent within [Bandura's \(1986\)](#) social cognitive theory.

Viewed descriptively, the evidence in this theme shows that structured SRL interventions were most convincing when the classroom provided explicit routines for goal setting, monitoring, and reflective feedback. Writing and reading interventions were especially prominent, but the theme also included oral presentation, grammar, and listening-related work. Across these studies, autonomy was fostered not by withdrawing instruction but by making regulatory processes visible and repeatable within everyday classroom activity.

The studies also suggest that duration, teacher guidance, and emotional support matter. Longer interventions were more likely to show sustained SRL gains, whereas short interventions sometimes produced only temporary improvements. In classroom terms, this means that strategy instruction becomes most autonomy-supportive when it is embedded across time, reinforced through feedback, and accompanied by attention to learner confidence and anxiety.

Table 2
Structured SRL Instruction and Strategy-based Interventions

Author/ Year	Participant Profile	SRL Framework & Taught Strategies	Modality & Duration	Language Skill Targeted	Key SRL / Language Gains	ES / Practical Impact
Tuero et al. (2022)	761 primary (Spain)	Zimmerman cycle; goal setting, self-monitoring	12-wk whole-class programme	All 4 skills	↑ academic scores at 3-mo follow-up	d = 0.33
Leins et al. (2017)	6 classes, US high-school LD	SRSD writing; POW+TREE	8 × 45-min lessons	Argumentativ e writing	↑ writing quality & self-advocacy	Qualitative + gains rubric
Kavani & Amjadiparvar (2018)	55 Iranian intermediate EFL learners	Reading strategy bundle; metacognitive strategies	12 sessions, strategy-based instruction	Reading comprehensio n	↑ motivation, SRL, reading	$\eta^2 > 0.14$
Guo et al. (2021)	521 HK primary	Process-based writing SRL	Regular classes, 1 term	Writing	↑ before-writing planning SRL	$\beta = .45$
Teng (2019)	133 Chinese Grade 6	SRSD vs text-structure	4-wk	Writing	SRSD → ↑ quality	Cohen's d ≈ 0.6
Tam & Leung (2019)	214 HK secondary dyslexia	Structured literacy SRL	40-wk split-group	Reading & SRL	↑ SRL scales	Small-to-moderate effect
Lin (2024)	84 TW high-school	ABI + SRL op training	6-week dual- language course	Oral presenta tion	ABI+SRL > ABI only	$\eta^2 = .31$
Jozwik & Cuenca- Carlino (2020)	Rural US ELL-LD	SRSD persuasive writing	10 lessons	Writing self-advocacy	Teachers' guides, ↑ clarity	Qualitative evidence
Linde & Daniela (2025)	45 teachers, 1 328 Latvian pupils	Reading Circle extensive-reading SRL	9-mo	Reading	↑ motivation, SRL	Teachers' ratings
Zare et al. (2025)	96 Iran undergrad	Data-driven FonF tasks	5 wks corpus-based	Grammar usage	Short-term increase in strategy use	Gains fade 6 wks
Zhang et al. (2024)	3 CN MATESOL	Immersion EAP SRL reflections	1 semester	Academic reading	↑ goal-setting, monitoring	Narrative evidence
Al-Azzemy & Al-Jamal (2019)	38 Kuwaiti teachers	Textbook listening SRL	Content analysis and observations	Listening	Identified gaps → recs.	Descriptive
Guo et al. (2018)	EU CLIL HE module	Autonomy- support CLIL	4-wk module	Multiskill	Prototype resource	Design output
Guo et al. (2018)	753 CN undergrad	Anxiety strategy training	Survey	Affect across skills	Low-anxiety → ↑ SRL	SEM paths

Cognitive and metacognitive strategy profiles, measurement and outcomes (13 studies)

This theme synthesizes 13 studies examining how learners use, measure, and benefit from cognitive and metacognitive SRL strategies in ELT. In relation to the review questions, these studies are important because they identify the specific regulatory actions that underpin classroom autonomy: planning, monitoring, strategy selection, feedback use, and self-evaluation. They also show how autonomy-related capacities are often inferred through validated strategy instruments, which makes the quality of measurement a substantive issue rather than a purely technical one.

Furthermore, various specialized instruments have been developed to capture strategy use specific to distinct language skills. [Uztosun \(2020\)](#) validated the Speaking SRL Motivation Scale, highlighting task value and affect as significant components influencing Turkish EFL learners' speaking skills, while also recognizing its narrow skill-specific focus. Zhou and Rose (2021) similarly developed the Listening SRL Battery, which effectively assesses learners' preview and monitoring strategies, directly correlating self-efficacy and proficiency to SRL strategy adoption, although acknowledging limitations inherent in self-report methodologies. [Nguyen's \(2024\)](#) pronunciation SRL questionnaire also offered critical insights into tertiary Vietnamese learners' listening and segmental pronunciation strategies, emphasizing the strong commitment students demonstrated toward pronunciation-focused SRL practices.

Several studies have further highlighted dominant cognitive and metacognitive strategy clusters among learners, confirming correlations with enhanced proficiency levels. [Wang et al. \(2024\)](#), for instance, used structural equation modeling (SEM) to identify metacognition and feedback as significant predictors of SRL proficiency among international students in China. Their findings align closely with Bandura's social cognitive theory, underscoring the interplay between self-efficacy, motivation, and strategic engagement in language learning contexts ([Bandura, 1986](#)). Similarly, [Katsarou and Kambakis-Vougiouklis \(2020\)](#) observed a meaningful relationship between learners' self-regulatory capacities and their vocabulary learning strategies, reinforcing the critical role of metacognition in effective language acquisition. The relationship between cognitive and metacognitive strategy use and academic outcomes such as grade point average (GPA) and exam scores has been consistently affirmed across multiple contexts. [Ngamsom and Huttayavilaiphan \(2025\)](#) identified SRL strategies as the strongest predictor of academic performance among undergraduate Thai learners, suggesting that strategic SRL application significantly impacts language learning outcomes. Correspondingly, [Şeker \(2016\)](#) indicated that Turkish undergraduates who actively engaged in orientation and evaluative strategies showed notably improved exam performance. These findings reinforce [Zimmerman's \(2013\)](#) cyclical SRL model, illustrating how learners' strategic behaviors in the forethought and performance phases translate into enhanced academic outcomes ([Zimmerman, 2013](#)).

The analysis of demographic and contextual factors influencing SRL strategy adoption also revealed important nuances. [Habók et al. \(2022\)](#) identified proficiency level and learner attitude as significant predictors among Hungarian secondary students, while [Loi and Hang \(2021\)](#) found that Vietnamese preservice teachers' starting proficiency shaped later gains in strategy use. Several studies also acknowledged contextual constraints. [Zare et al. \(2024\)](#) noted that participants who had experienced COVID-19 disruption might display atypical motivational and affective profiles, and [Nikčević-Milković and Balenović \(2024\)](#) indicated the need for larger samples when interpreting writing-strategy findings. Overall, the evidence suggests that classroom autonomy develops unevenly across learners and is partly conditioned by prior proficiency, context, and the strength of the available measurement tools.

Taken together, these studies show that cognitive and metacognitive strategies are among the strongest classroom-level predictors of autonomous learning because they directly support learners' ability to plan, monitor, and revise their own language work. The findings also caution, however, that many conclusions depend on self-report instruments and cross-sectional designs. For that reason, the theme supports the review's larger argument while also pointing to the need for more triangulated evidence on how strategy use translates into sustained autonomy over time.

Table 3

Cognitive and Metacognitive Strategy Profiles, Measurement and Outcomes

Author / Year	Sample & Context	Instrument / Validation	Dominant Strategy Clusters	Significant Predictors	Reported Limitations
Habók et al. (2022)	653 Hungarian lower-secondary students	SRFLLSQ (S ² R) CFA >.9	Metacog., social	Proficiency, attitude	Self-report bias
Zare et al. (2024)	361 Iranian B.A. students	Mixed-methods SRL scale	(Meta) affective, (Meta) motivation	SRL → task engage	COVID online sample
Ngamsom & Huttayavilaiphan, (2025)	270 Thai undergraduates	Survey + SEM	Motivation & SRL bundle	SRL strongest predictor of GPA	Cross-sectional
Ramirez-Echeverry et al. (2016)	218 CO engineers	MSLQ-Colombia EFA/CFA	Cognitive, regulation	Reliability $\alpha > .8$	Discipline-specific
Uztosun (2020)	1 065 TR EFL	Speaking SRL motivation scale	Task value, affect	Good model fit	Focus on speaking only
Wang et al. (2024)	233 intl. students CN	Mixed survey + SEM	Metacognition, feedback	All four → SRL proficiency	Convenience sample
Zhou & Rose (2021)	412 CN EMI freshmen	Listening SRL battery	Preview, monitoring	SE & proficiency → SRL	Self-report
Nguyen (2024)	104 Croatian students	Pronunciation SRL Q	Listen-repeat, segmentals	Strong PSRL commitment	Need teacher feedback
Nikčević-Milković & Balenović (2024)	104 HR students	Writing SRL rubric	Planning, revision	Proficiency ↑ SRL	Small n
Katsarou & Kambakis-Vougiouklis (2020)	297 GR ESP	VLS-Q + SRCVoc	Lexical guessing, dict.	Self-reg capacity ↔ VLS	Correlational
Şeker (2016)	222 TR undergrad	SRL questionnaire	Orientation, eval.	SRL → exam score	Moderate SRL levels
Loi & Hang (2021)	41 VN preservice	Self-eval survey	Strategy use ↔ teaching acts	Starting level ↔ gain	Self-estimates
Gan et al. (2022)	316 CN EFL	SEESS development	Perf., self-reg, ling.	SE ↔ strategy use	Validation stage

Assessment and feedback practices that foster SRL (7 studies)

Assessment and feedback practices were consistently associated with autonomy because they created opportunities for learners to judge progress, calibrate performance, and act on feedback in real classroom time. Studies on self-assessment and peer assessment showed that iterative rubrics and structured comparison with criteria helped students engage more deliberately in reflective and evaluative processes (Kumar et al., 2023). In traditional ELT classrooms, these practices are especially important because they externalize regulatory standards that learners can gradually internalize.

A second pattern concerns teacher assessment literacy. Zhang et al. (2022) and Kang and Lam (2024) indicate that teachers' ability to design formative tasks, communicate criteria, and sustain process-oriented feedback strongly shapes whether assessment genuinely promotes SRL. In other words, classroom autonomy is fostered not simply by asking students to self-assess, but by providing the scaffolds and assessment culture that make self-assessment meaningful.

Assessment as learning (AaL) is another pivotal methodology examined within ELT contexts. Hinduja et al. (2020) explored AaL through student log activities over a seven-week pilot study, observing marked improvements in students' writing skills and motivation. This comprehensive approach actively engaged learners across all SRL phases, enabling continuous reflection, self-monitoring, and the use of adaptive learning strategies. Despite its limited duration, this study effectively demonstrated AaL's potential to substantially elevate student engagement and SRL

competencies, reinforcing the integral role of reflective practices in educational achievement. Teacher feedback modalities oral, written, and rubric-based have significant implications for fostering students' self-evaluation processes. Manuel et al. (2024) investigated the frequency and nature of teacher feedback, finding that consistent oral and written feedback substantially supported learners' monitoring capabilities. However, they noted the dominance of transmission-oriented feedback, underscoring the need for more interactive, dialogic feedback approaches aligned with Vygotsky's scaffolding principles, which suggest deeper learner engagement through collaborative teacher-student interactions (Vygotsky, 1978). Similarly, Amini et al. (2024) highlighted limitations in the practical application of productive feedback in classrooms, noting low adoption despite its identified efficacy across seven distinct features. This low utilization primarily resulted from teacher workload constraints, reflecting a broader systemic challenge in integrating comprehensive feedback mechanisms within daily instructional practices. Addressing this requires strategic interventions that consider teachers' workloads, enabling consistent and effective use of feedback strategies that significantly bolster student reflection and strategic learning.

Overall, the studies in this theme show that assessment promotes autonomy most effectively when it is dialogic, criteria-based, and explicitly tied to planning, monitoring, and reflection. Persistent barriers, including large classes, product-oriented cultures, and teacher workload, help explain why promising assessment practices do not always translate into consistent SRL gains. These findings therefore reinforce the view that autonomy-supportive assessment is both a pedagogical and an institutional issue.

Table 4*Assessment and Feedback Practices that Foster SRL*

Author/Year	Assessment Type	Feedback Features	Supported SRL Phase(s)	SRL / Language Outcomes	Implementation Challenges
Kumar et al. (2023)	Self vs. peer assessment	Rubrics, iterative	Reflection, evaluation	Increase in SRL, critical thinking, and problem solving	No diff. self vs peer
Zhang et al. (2022)	Teacher self-efficacy to use self-assessment	Training gaps	Forethought	SA missing from practice	Belief–practice gap
Kang & Lam (2024)	Formative assessment literacy	Design, use, and communication	Monitor, reflect	Product-oriented bias	Limited SRL tasks
Hinduja et al. (2020)	Assessment as Learning	Student logs	All phases	↑ writing, motivation	7-wk pilot
Manuel et al. (2024)	Teacher feedback observations	Oral+written, freq.	Monitor	Some SRL skills promoted	Transmission methods dominate
Amini et al. (2024)	Productive feedback survey	Seven features, rare use	Reflection	Low application	Teacher workload
Wolterinck-Broekhuis et al. (2024)	Student AfL perceptions	Clarify goals, evidence	Forethought	Peer/self-assess rare	Scale-up PD needed

Affective, motivational and emotional drivers (8 studies)

The eight studies synthesized in this theme demonstrate that autonomy in ELT is shaped not only by cognitive strategy use but also by affective and motivational conditions that make regulation sustainable. Academic passion, need satisfaction, emotional regulation, the ideal L2 self, and anxiety management all influenced whether learners could engage productively in goal setting, monitoring, and reflective adjustment. In classroom-based ELT, these variables matter because strategic behaviour becomes durable only when learners feel agentic, competent, and emotionally supported.

Another critical affective component highlighted is the satisfaction of basic psychological needs as outlined by SDT. Xu and Zhou (2024) investigated the reciprocal relationship between SRL strategy

use and the satisfaction of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Their findings indicated that students who experienced greater satisfaction of these psychological needs demonstrated heightened SRL strategy engagement, with autonomy support particularly influential. This reciprocity confirms the foundational role of autonomy in SRL processes, reinforcing prior assertions that learners with greater perceived autonomy are more inclined toward strategic learning behaviors (Akteruzzaman et al., 2024). Thus, educators should deliberately nurture environments that support autonomy, competence, and relatedness, fostering deeper engagement in self-regulated learning. Building upon these affective dimensions, Akteruzzaman et al. (2024) further analyzed SDT motivational constructs autonomy and competence using comprehensive surveys and qualitative focus groups. The study underscored the detrimental effects of external regulation pressures on learners' SRL engagement. External pressure diminished learners' sense of autonomy, thereby negatively impacting their self-regulatory behaviors. Consequently, reducing extrinsic pressures and promoting intrinsic motivation is essential to facilitate optimal SRL engagement, a recommendation deeply aligned with Bandura's (1986) views on self-efficacy and intrinsic motivational drivers influencing learning behaviors.

Similarly, the ideal second language (L2) self, as described by ZabihiAtergeleh et al. (2025), serves as a significant motivational construct driving SRL in ELT settings. Employing structural equation modeling (SEM), their research demonstrated how students' ideal L2 self significantly motivates their SRL behaviors through intrinsic motivation pathways. This finding highlights the critical importance of encouraging students to envision positive future language identities, thereby intensifying their intrinsic motivation and SRL engagement. Such pedagogical practices are vital for language educators aiming to sustain learners' long-term commitment and self-directed language acquisition. Furthermore, emotions substantially impact learners' SRL behaviors, as evidenced by Abbott and Lee (2023), who applied SEM to investigate emotional influences on adult ESL learners' SRL strategies. Their findings established that emotions significantly affect learners' goal-setting and monitoring strategies, with SRL mediating the relationship between emotional experiences and academic gains. This outcome supports integrating emotion-aware instructional designs to facilitate SRL practices effectively, enabling learners to navigate emotional challenges and maintain consistent engagement in learning tasks.

The interplay between anxiety and SRL strategy use was explored by Guo et al. (2018), who used a specialized Foreign Language Anxiety scale to show a clear inverse relationship between anxiety and effective regulation. Anxious learners engaged less often in goal setting and monitoring, whereas lower anxiety was associated with more active use of SRL strategies. Teacher emotion also mattered. Zhang and Wang (2024) found that teachers' positive emotional regulation and modelling shaped classroom climates in ways that encouraged students to adopt comparable self-regulatory behaviours. Wang et al. (2024) similarly highlighted motivation and self-efficacy as core affective drivers of SRL proficiency. Collectively, these studies show that autonomy-supportive classrooms require more than strategic instruction; they also require emotional conditions that allow those strategies to be enacted consistently.

For the present review, this theme clarifies that learner autonomy is not purely behavioural. It is partly an affective achievement sustained through confidence, intrinsic value, supportive relationships, and manageable levels of anxiety. This finding broadens the interpretation of classroom SRL by showing why some students benefit more fully than others from the same instructional opportunities.

Table 5
Affective, Motivational and Emotional Drivers

Author/Year	Dominant Affective Construct	Measurement Tool	SRL Variables Analysed	Key Findings	Pedagogical Implications
Izadpanah (2023)	Academic passion	4 questionnaires	Goal-orientation, SR	Passion mediates SRL-burnout	Foster passion

Author/Year	Dominant Affective Construct	Measurement Tool	SRL Variables Analysed	Key Findings	Pedagogical Implications
Xu & Zhou (2024)	Need satisfaction	2-wave survey + interviews	Strategy use	Reciprocal SRL ↔ needs	Support autonomy
Akteruzzaman et al. (2024)	SDT motivation	SDT survey + focus	Autonomy, competence	External reg. hinders SRL	Reduce extrinsic press.
ZabihiAtergeleh et al. (2025)	L2MSS + IM	L2MSS + SRL SEM	Affective, behavior, cognitive	Ideal L2 self via IM → SRL	Build ideal self
Abbott & Lee (2023)	Emotions in adult ESL	SEM	Goal set, monitor	SRL mediates emotion–gain	Emotion-aware design
Guo et al. (2018)	Foreign Lang Anxiety	31-item SRL-FLA scale	6 strategy types	Low anxiety → ↑ SRL	Provide coping strat.
Zhang & Wang (2024)	Teacher positive emotions	Interviews	Emotion reg., modelling	Pos. emotions cascade to SRL	PD on emotion reg.
Wang et al. (2024)	Motivation, SE	SEM (see Theme 2)	Metacog. drivers	Motivation → SRL proficiency	Embed feedback loops

Teacher cognitions, training and professional practices (8 studies)

Teacher cognitions, training, and professional practices directly shaped how classroom SRL was interpreted and enacted across the eight studies in this theme. The evidence shows that teacher belief is consequential because SRL in traditional ELT is seldom self-generating: it depends on whether teachers value autonomy, understand strategy instruction, and can translate those beliefs into manageable classroom routines. Accordingly, this theme addresses the review question about mediating conditions by positioning teachers as the principal agents who convert SRL theory into everyday classroom practice.

Similar observations were reported by Slabodar (2024), who studied novice teachers and found substantial gaps between theoretical familiarity with SRL and its practical application. Teachers often exhibited minimal integration of autonomy-enhancing tasks in their classrooms, largely due to inadequate explicit training. This underscores a critical need for explicit SRL modules in professional training, enabling novice teachers to translate theoretical knowledge into effective classroom practices. Such structured training can significantly bridge the gap between teachers' theoretical knowledge and instructional applications. Pastor and Fernández (2018) examined content and language integrated learning (CLIL) teachers' cognitions, emphasizing the influence of neoliberal educational paradigms on their instructional practices. Their findings revealed tensions arising from neoliberal values promoting self-governance and commodification of English, which often conflicted with teachers' professional identities and pedagogical preferences. The study recommended reflective PD initiatives that empower teachers to critically analyze and reconcile these tensions, thus promoting alignment between their instructional practices and SRL-oriented pedagogies.

Moreover, Qiu et al. (2024) highlighted disparities in teacher cognitions and practices among English for specific purposes (ESP) teachers at universities and vocational institutions. While university teachers demonstrated a stronger inclination toward explicit self-assessment practices aligned with SRL, vocational teachers exhibited notable conceptual gaps, suggesting targeted professional development programs specifically addressing vocational contexts. Such tailored PD programs can equip teachers with the necessary competencies to foster SRL effectively within varied educational environments. Francis and Afful (2023) further explored lecturers' perceptions regarding prereading SRL practices, revealing a consensus on their importance. However, practical integration was hindered by overloaded curricula, limiting lecturers' capacity to adequately embed SRL practices in their teaching. Their recommendation for prioritizing interactive learning (IL) courses emphasizes the need for curricular revisions to accommodate comprehensive SRL strategies effectively, ensuring sufficient opportunities for student engagement in reflective and strategic learning activities. The role

of teacher self-efficacy in SRL implementation was also critically examined by [Gan et al. \(2020\)](#), who investigated the beliefs of student teachers regarding their capabilities in instructing SRL strategies. While participants generally reported moderate self-efficacy, they acknowledged significant barriers stemming from insufficient mentor scaffolding and practical instructional support during their training. Recommendations from this study highlighted the essential role of mentor-supported practica in bolstering teachers' confidence and competence, which aligns with Bandura's concept of self-efficacy as a determinant of successful instructional behavior.

Longitudinal professional support also appeared important, but the evidence should be interpreted carefully. [Ambinintsoa and Castro \(2024\)](#), drawing on two case studies, documented sustained autonomy development through reflective journal practices focused on goal setting and evaluation. While these findings are insightful, their limited sample constrains generalizability and suggests the need for broader follow-up research. Related work by [Zhang and Wang \(2026\)](#) further showed that teachers' emotional regulation strategies such as mindfulness and self-talk can influence classroom SRL climates, although these practices often remained informal rather than systematically trained.

Overall, the studies in [Table 6](#) indicate that autonomy-supportive SRL is most likely to emerge when teachers receive explicit preparation in strategy instruction, formative feedback, and reflective practice. Where training is fragmented, curricula are overloaded, or mentor support is weak, SRL tends to remain a desirable principle rather than a stable instructional routine. This theme therefore highlights professional development as a structural requirement for classroom autonomy, not a supplementary add-on.

Table 6
Teacher Cognitions, Training and Professional Practices

Author/Year	Participant Role	SRL Knowledge/ Beliefs	Reported Practices	Barriers / Enablers	PD Recommendations
Hassaskhah (2016)	18 TEFL pre-service	Dynamic motivation mgmt.	Temporal self-reg teaching	Context + personal factors	Integrate SRL in TE courses
Slabodar (2024)	12 novice teachers	Familiarity but low integration	Limited autonomy tasks	Lack explicit training	Explicit SRL modules
Pastor & Fernández (2018)	28 CLIL staff	Neoliberal positioning	Self-gov. English commod.	Identity tension	Reflective PD
Qiu et al. (2024)	ESP uni vs voc. teachers	Blend explicit/implicit	Strong SA at uni	Teacher concept gaps	SRL-focused PD esp. voc.
Francis & Afful (2023)	15 lecturers	Value prereading SRL	Advocate dialogue	Overloaded syllabi	IL courses priority
Gan et al. (2020)	128 student teachers	Self-efficacy SRL instr.	Moderate	Need mentor scaffolds	Practicum SRL tasks
Ambinintsoa & Castro (2024)	2 case studies	Reflective journals	Goal-setting, eval.	Long-term autonomy	Longitudinal support
Zhang & Wang (2026)	34 CN EFL teachers	Pos. emotion reg.	Mindfulness, self-talk	Awareness but informal	Emotion-SRL PD

Contextual and environmental influences (6 studies)

The six studies in this theme show that SRL does not operate independently of the wider conditions in which classroom learning takes place. Policy shifts, spatial arrangements, curricular transitions, materials design, and extracurricular opportunities all shaped the extent to which students could regulate learning autonomously. These studies are especially relevant to the review because they clarify what “traditional classroom settings” means in practice: not a uniform environment, but a cluster of contextual arrangements that can either support or constrain classroom-based regulation.

[Mohammadi and Zandi \(2025\)](#) compared physical and virtual learning spaces and argued that learners develop different “spatial regulation attitudes,” meaning different ways of organizing

attention, resources, interaction, and participation across learning environments. In practical terms, this refers to how students position themselves to study effectively, for example, whether they can access immediate teacher feedback, manage distraction, and use classroom or online resources strategically. [Li et al. \(2020\)](#) similarly showed that the transition from high school to university can disrupt SRL continuity when expectations for autonomy increase faster than students' regulatory routines.

In ELT listening instruction, textbook design emerged as a pivotal factor influencing metacognitive SRL processes. [Wang \(2025\)](#) critically examined how textbooks influence learners' metacognitive engagement through listening tasks. Their findings indicated significant shortcomings in current textbook features, such as inadequate scaffolding and limited prompts for reflective and evaluative activities, essential for effective SRL practices. Wang emphasized the necessity for textbook revisions to include explicit metacognitive strategy instructions and structured activities that facilitate pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening self-assessment, thereby enhancing learners' autonomous strategy employment and overall comprehension outcomes. Beyond formal classroom settings, [Phung et al. \(2023\)](#) investigated the influence of club-based extracurricular activities on students' SRL engagement. These activities, characterized by authentic communication and leadership opportunities, significantly enhanced learners' 21st-century skills, particularly self-regulation beyond traditional class contexts. Their adaptable club-based model demonstrates how structured extracurricular engagement can substantially foster SRL behaviors, promoting lifelong autonomous learning skills. This approach exemplifies Vygotsky's emphasis on social interactions and collaborative scaffolding as fundamental to cognitive development and self-regulation. Lastly, [Aslan \(2017\)](#) explored the impact of contextualized autonomous speech (CAS) phonology on SRL behaviors in second-language speech development. This research rejected the traditional native-speaker norm, advocating instead for pedagogies informed by contextual autonomy. Aslan found that learning environments which prioritize learner autonomy and contextual relevance significantly promoted effective SRL strategies in phonological development. The outcomes underscore the pedagogical implications of embracing context-sensitive and autonomy-supportive methods, aligning with Zimmerman's cyclical model emphasizing learner-driven strategy application.

Collectively, these studies indicate that classroom autonomy is context-sensitive. Supportive policy conditions, coherent curricular expectations, well-designed materials, and meaningful extracurricular opportunities can extend learners' regulatory capacity, whereas poorly aligned environments can weaken it. This theme, therefore, reinforces the conclusion that SRL in ELT should be interpreted as both an instructional process and an ecological phenomenon.

Table 7

Contextual and Environmental Influences

Author/Year	Contextual Focus	Key Environmental Variables	Observed SRL Behaviours	Reported Outcomes	Transferability
Ashadi et al. (2022)	HST cancellation policy	Curriculum freedom	↑ teacher/student SRL	Varied practices	Needs larger studies
Mohammadi & Zandi (2025)	Virtual vs phys. spaces	Assemblages, social	Spatial regulation attitudes (how learners manage attention, resources, and participation across learning spaces)	Motivation shifts	Supports resource and environment mapping
Li et al. (2020)	HS → Uni transition	Content, assessment gaps	Eco-potentials	Need SRL continuity	Align curricula
Wang (2025)	Listening textbooks	Metacognition coverage	Pre-, while-, post-	Inadequate SRL cues	Revise textbook design

Author/Year	Contextual Focus	Key Environmental Variables	Observed SRL Behaviours	Reported Outcomes	Transferability
Phung et al. (2023)	Club-based tasks	Authentic comm., leadership	Beyond-class SRL	↑ 21C skills	Adaptable model
Aslan (2017)	CAS phonology	Autonomy, env.	L2 speech SRL	Reject native norm	CAS informs pedagogy

DISCUSSION

This systematic review examined how SRL operates in classroom-based ELT and how it supports the development of learner autonomy. Rather than reiterating the findings, this discussion situates them within established theoretical frameworks of Zimmerman's (2013) cyclical model, Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, and Bandura's social cognitive theory and contrasts them with prior research to clarify points of convergence, divergence, and implication.

Across the studies, SRL consistently proved most effective when it was explicitly taught and systematically scaffolded. This aligns with meta-analytic evidence that privileges direct strategy instruction over implicit exposure (e.g., Chen, 2022; Dignath & Veenman, 2020), but the present synthesis goes further by showing that, in face-to-face ELT contexts, explicit instruction is not simply advantageous but essential. Unlike technology-rich environments that may afford independent exploration, classroom-based settings depend on teacher mediation to make regulatory processes visible and repeatable. This finding reinforces Zimmerman's (2013) view of SRL as a teachable, cyclical process, while also challenging claims that self-regulation can emerge organically through learner-centered or task-based approaches alone. The evidence suggests that such approaches promote engagement, yet do not reliably produce sustained regulation without accompanying metacognitive guidance. A more defensible position, therefore, is that learner-centered pedagogy and explicit SRL instruction should be integrated rather than treated as alternatives.

The centrality of cognitive and metacognitive strategies, particularly planning, monitoring, and self-evaluation corroborates their role as core mechanisms of autonomy, consistent with prior work (e.g., Pintrich, 2004; Wang et al., 2024). At the same time, the review exposes limitations in how these strategies are typically measured. Heavy reliance on self-report instruments raises concerns about the accuracy of inferred behaviors, echoing longstanding critiques regarding discrepancies between reported and enacted metacognition. Moreover, the findings complicate the common assumption that strategy use is primarily an individual cognitive trait. Instead, they point to strategy use as socially mediated and instructionally embedded, thereby strengthening Vygotsky's (1978) account of learning as co-constructed through interaction and scaffolding. In practical terms, this means that strategy effectiveness cannot be separated from the quality of classroom design and teacher guidance.

Assessment and feedback practices further illuminate how SRL is enacted in real classrooms. Consistent with formative assessment theory and Assessment as Learning, feedback supported regulation when it was dialogic, criteria-referenced, and integrated into ongoing tasks. However, a persistent gap emerged between theoretical prescriptions and classroom realities. While the literature frequently advocates for peer and self-assessment, implementation remained uneven due to structural constraints such as large class sizes, limited time, and product-oriented assessment cultures. This tension suggests that assessment literacy is not merely a pedagogical competence but a systemic condition shaped by institutional expectations and workload. Consequently, improving SRL through assessment requires not only teacher training but also supportive policy and curricular alignment.

Affective and motivational factors also played a decisive role in sustaining SRL. Consistent with social cognitive theory and self-determination theory, constructs such as self-efficacy, anxiety, and the ideal L2 self influenced learners' willingness to initiate and maintain regulatory strategies. Recent work grounded in self-determination theory further underscores autonomy and competence as key drivers of sustained engagement (Akteruzzaman et al., 2024). Importantly, the relationship between motivation and SRL appears reciprocal rather than unidirectional: effective regulation can strengthen

motivation just as motivation enables regulation. Comparable dynamics have been reported in recent ELT contexts, where motivational dispositions shape ongoing strategic engagement (Hastomo et al., 2025). These findings extend earlier accounts by positioning emotion and motivation as integral components of SRL rather than peripheral influences, while also highlighting variability across learners and the need for differentiated support.

Teacher-related factors emerged as critical mediators that determine whether SRL principles are realized in practice. While previous studies acknowledge the importance of teachers, the present synthesis demonstrates that beliefs, knowledge, and training directly shape the translation of SRL into classroom routines. This extends Vygotsky's (1978) notion of scaffolding by emphasizing teachers as designers of regulatory environments, not merely facilitators of participation. At the same time, a consistent discrepancy was observed between teachers' conceptual understanding of SRL and their instructional enactment, echoing earlier findings (Gan et al., 2020). Recent classroom-based evidence similarly indicates that teacher mediation and instructional clarity are decisive in enabling SRL to function effectively (Hastomo et al., 2025). These patterns suggest that professional development must move beyond theoretical awareness to provide concrete, context-sensitive models of practice.

The review also confirms that SRL operates within a broader ecological system. In line with ecological perspectives on language learning, autonomy is shaped by interacting factors such as curriculum design, materials, institutional policies, and extracurricular opportunities. The findings demonstrate that these elements can either constrain or extend learners' regulatory capacity: for example, textbooks that lack metacognitive prompts limit engagement, whereas authentic activities beyond the classroom can strengthen it. This reinforces the view that SRL is not solely an individual or instructional construct but a context-dependent process. At the same time, variation across contexts raises questions about the universal applicability of dominant SRL models, suggesting the need for more culturally and institutionally responsive frameworks.

Methodologically, the evidence base remains uneven. The predominance of cross-sectional designs and self-report measures limits causal interpretation and obscures how autonomy develops over time. This supports ongoing calls for longitudinal, mixed-methods research that triangulates behavioral data, performance outcomes, and learner reflections. In addition, the distribution of studies across language skills is imbalanced, with writing and reading receiving disproportionate attention compared to listening and speaking. Addressing these gaps is essential for developing a more comprehensive understanding of SRL across language modalities.

Taken together, the findings both support and extend existing theory while revealing important tensions between idealized models and classroom realities. SRL in classroom-based ELT emerges as a multidimensional construct that depends on explicit instruction, meaningful assessment, motivated learners, capable teachers, and supportive contexts. Future research should therefore adopt integrated and context-sensitive approaches that capture the dynamic interplay among these dimensions and provide stronger evidence of how learner autonomy develops over time.

Methodological reflections and future directions

A critical examination of the reviewed studies reveals several methodological limitations that affect the strength of current evidence. Many studies rely on cross-sectional designs and self-report measures, limiting the ability to draw causal inferences or track long-term development of autonomy. This confirms earlier critiques in SRL research and underscores the need for longitudinal, mixed-methods studies that combine behavioral observation, performance data, and learner reflections.

In addition, the distribution of research across language skills remains uneven. Writing and reading dominate the literature while listening and speaking are less frequently examined in relation to autonomy. This imbalance suggests a gap in understanding how SRL operates across different modalities of language use.

Overall, the findings of this review support and extend existing theoretical frameworks while also highlighting tensions between theory and practice. SRL in classroom-based ELT emerges as a complex, multidimensional construct that requires explicit instruction, supportive assessment

practices, motivated learners, skilled teachers, and enabling contexts. Future research should therefore move beyond isolated interventions and adopt more integrated and contextually grounded approaches to studying SRL and learner autonomy.

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review demonstrates that SRL can strengthen learner autonomy in classroom-based ELT when teachers explicitly scaffold planning, monitoring, feedback use, and reflection across sustained instructional routines. The evidence from 56 studies shows that effective SRL is not merely a set of individual strategies; it is a classroom ecology shaped by assessment design, motivation, emotional support, teacher expertise, and contextual conditions. For pedagogy, the review highlights the importance of integrating strategy instruction with formative assessment and professional development. For research, it points to the need for longitudinal, cross-cultural, and multimethod studies capable of tracing how autonomy develops over time and across diverse ELT settings.

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DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI IN SCIENTIFIC WRITING

During the preparation of this work, the authors used ChatGPT to enhance the clarity of the writing. After using ChatGPT, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the publication's content.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT:

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper. The research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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