A Psycholinguistics Case Study: General Self-Esteem, Metacognitive Strategies and Their Impacts on Positive English Learning Outcomes

Bir Ruh Dilbilim Olgu Çalışması: Genel Benlik Saygısı, Bilişüstü Stratejiler ve İngilizce Öğrenme Çıktıları Üzerine Etkileri

Hakan AYDOĞAN
Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, Turkey.

Abstract

   General self-esteem can be defined as one's perception of his/her self-worthness. This construct is very important in educational science because it influences students' self-image related to their academic success. Metacognitive strategies are mostly investigated in cognitive psychology. They facilitate learning process and can lead to more positive English learning outcomes. Hence, the study is to examine interrelations among these variables in order to provide in-depth patterns of learning English as a second language. It has been conducted on 201 State tertiary level in Aegean region and last-grade college students in Turkey in 2016 as the English mastery level of the college students were quite similar to the university ones. Sample consisted of 40.3% males and 59.7% females, who were 16 to 25 years old. This study is a quantitative one, mostly based on the correlational analysis. There were three main instruments: ''Rosenberg's self-esteem scale'' (RSES), ''Metacognitive strategies scale'' (MCSS), and ''A list of factors that impact English learning outcomes''. The results showed positive correlation between general self-esteem, metacognitive skills and some other factors that can influence English learning outcomes. General self-esteem is in a positive and statistically significant correlation with students' usage of metacognitive strategies. General self-esteem is in positive correlations with collaborated learning, communication with native English speakers, and with watching English TV channels and listening to English music. The capacity for self-motivation during learning acitivities correlates negatively with teacher's educational skills, however, achieving learning goals correlates positively with watching English TV programs and listening to English music. In addition, there were no statistically significant gender differences in the mentioned variables.

   Keywords: *EFL, ESL,general gelf-esteem, metacognitive strategies.*

Özet

Genel benlik saygısı kişinin kendi değeri ile ilgili algıdır. Bu zihni yapı, öğrencilerin akademik başarılarıyla ilgili kendi imajlarını etkilediğinden eğitim bilimlerinde gayet önemlidir. Bilişüstü stratejiler genellikle bilişsel psikolojide incelenirler. Öğrenme sürecini kolaylaştırırlar ve daha pozitif İngilizce öğrenme çıktıları alınmasını sağlarlar. Bu yüzden, çalışmamız İngilizcenin yabancı dil olarak öğreniminde detaylı modeller sağlamakta ve bu değişkenler arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemektedir. Çalışma Türkiye›de 2016 yılında Ege bölgesinde bir Devlet üniversitesi ve bir kolejin son sınıf öğrencileri olmak üzere toplamda 201 öğrenci üzerinde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Kolej öğrencilerinin son sınıfının çalışmaya dahil edilme sebebi İngilizce seviyelerinin üniversite öğrencilerininkine yakın olmalarıdır. Çalışma korelasyon analizi kullanmıştır. Sonuçlar genel benlik saygısı, bilişüstü beceriler ve İngilizce öğrenme çıktılarını etkileyebilecek diğer bazı faktörler arasında pozitif korelasyon göstermiştir.Öğrencilerin genel benlik saygılarının, bilişüstü stratejileri kullanımlarıyla önemli derecede pozitif korelasyona sahip oldukları ve yine aynı şekilde genel benlik saygısının akranlarıyla işbirlikli öğrenme, anadili İngilizce olanlarla iletişim ve İngilizce televizyon kanalları seyretmeyle ve İngilizce müzik dinlemeyle pozitif korelasyon içinde oldukları görülmüştür.Öğrenme aktiviteleri esnasındaki kendi kendini motive etme kapasitesinin öğretmenin eğitici yetenekleriyle negatif korelasyon göstermesine karşın öğrenme hedeflerini gerçekleştirmenin İngilizce televizyon programları seyretme ve İngilizce müzik dinleme ile pozitif korelasyon içerisinde oldukları ortaya çıkmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *EFL, ESL, genel benlik saygısı, bilişüstü stratejiler.*

1. Introduction

1.1. Theoretical Background and Literature Review

Self-esteem is a well-known psychological construct. In fact, it has become a household word because it is used frequently in everyday life (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003). There are several types of self-esteem: general (e.g. Rosenberg, 1965), social (Lawson, Marshall, & McGrath, 1979), professional (Tabassum & Ali, 2012), academic (Pullmann & Allik, 2008), physical (Marsh, Richards, Johnson, Roche, & Tremayne 1994), and collective self-esteem (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992).

General (or global) self-esteem is the extent to which a person estimates himself/herself in terms of his/her self-image and worthiness. If somebody thinks that he/she is an extraordinary, important and competent person, it can be said that he/she has a very high level of general self-esteem. Otherwise (i.e. when somebody thinks that he/she is a worthless person), it is assumed that the person has a very low level of general self-esteem. In other words, general self-esteem comprises positive and/or negative evaluations of oneself (Smith &Mackie, 2007). Henceforward, global self-esteem is related to evaluative feedback, self-evaluations and fellings of self-worth (Brown & Marshall, 2006). Furthermore, general self-esteem is a good predictor of school performance i.e. academic achievements (Javanmard, Hoshmandja, & Ahmadzade, 2013) and facilitates persistence of behavior after experience of failure along with occupational success (Baumeister et al., 2003). Actually, general (global) self-esteem is a personal aspect of self-esteem whereas collective self-esteem is the self-evaluation

of his/her social identity (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992).

In Badayai and Ismail's (2012) research one's self-esteem is relatively high in childhood, then drops during adolescence, later to arise gradually throughout adulthood, and then declines sharply in old age. Badayai and Ismail (2012) stated that despite the general developmental age differences across the human lifespan, an individual tends to maintain his/her ordering relative to one another; whereby individuals who have relatively high self-esteem at one point in time tend to have relatively high self-esteem years later on.

In line with Oxford's (1990) definition of learning strategies, it can be said they are specific activities that facilitate the process of learning and make it faster, easier and more agreeable. In spite of the fact that her definition of learning strategies was made in the language learing context, it can be applied to other school or academic subjects as well. Learning strategies could be divided into three categories (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990): cognitive (repeating, elaborating and organizing subject materials), self-regulating (regulating the usage of metacognitive strategies as well as one's own level of motivation), and metacognitive strategies (perception, evaluation, and application of cognitive strategies).

The main role of metacognitive strategies is that of controlling, overseeing, managing and directing the process of learning (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002).According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990) as well as Yin and Agnes (2001), metacognitive strategies include higher-order executive mental functions such as paying attention to important contents or selective attention together with planning and evaluating the process of learning. Victori and Tragant (2003) provided a comprehensive review of the studies that had dealt with relationships between learning strategies (the metacognitive group of them was included also) and academic performance. These studies revealed positive correlations between these variables.

In Rozen's (2014) research most self-regulation studies about problem solving tend to focus on metacognition; few have explored the motivational-emotional component. Rozen's study developed, examined, and compared two SRL interventions dealing with two components of self-regulation: metacognitive regulation (MC) and motivational-emotional regulation (ME). In the end, the MC group performed best in metacognitive self-regulation, and the ME group performed best in certain motivational-emotional aspects of self-regulation

Chen (2014) found out in his research that age increase is likely to encourage learners to use strategies with more emphasis on the social and functional strategies and his research's implications are that it is critical for teachers to be more aware of the differences in their students and adjust their teaching practices to meet the developmental needs of students. Chen (2014) also pointed out that tertiary level students used social and affective strategies more frequently than the other age groups did.

To be more specific, general self esteem and metacognitive strategies are two factors that have important role in English learning context such as English as a second language (ELS) and English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms. However, there

are several other variables that should be highlighted. Some of them are the following: student's individual learning effort, teachers' individual (teaching) skills, collaboration with other students in a class, communication with native English speakers and interacting with original English materials, media, and similar things (e.g. watching English TV channels and listening to English music). These factors can be described as motivational, social and educational activities that influence the process of learning English. Regarding a study conducted by Hein and Caune (2014), the perceived effort of students is significantly related to teachers' support and their teaching methods. In addition, students' motivation and their self-esteem are also influenced by teachers' supportive behavior.

A study conducted by Ahour and Hassanzadeh (2015) revealed strong, positive correlations between general self-esteem, learning strategies and English proficiency. These researchers studied not only metacognitive but affective and social language learning strategies as well. Therefore, high general self-esteem and frequently used learning strategies lead to better English knowledge, skills and competences. In addition, better English competencies strengthen learners' general self-esteem and encourages them to persist in using language learning strategies. In another study, general self-esteem was in small, positive and statistically significant correlations with: Memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social strategies (Asadifard & Biria, 2013).

Badayai and Ismail (2012) pointed out that foreign language learners develop in the following three aspects: linguistically (e.g. Learning the target language), socially (e.g. interacting and communicating with other students and English native speakers), and cognitively (e.g. using more cognitive and metacognitive learning strategies). The same researcher found out those students who were at higher levels of education use metacognitive strategies more frequently compared to those who were at lower educational levels.

Taking into account the complexity of processes and activities that are taking place in English learning classrooms (as well as students' global self-esteem, motivation, effort and efficacy), it was tried to shed a light on this topic by simplifying this context. It has been done by posing five research questions below.

1.2. Aim of the Present Study and Research Questions

The general aim of this study is to examine correlations between self-esteem, metacognitive strategies and participants' opinions about the impact of various factors on English learning outcomes. The specific objectives of our research are given in the form of the following questions:

1. Does general self-esteem correlate with metacognitive strategies in general?
2. Does general self-esteem correlate with different types of metacognitive strategies?
3. Is general self-esteem connected to factors that impact desirable (positive) English learning outcomes?
4. Are metacognitive strategies related to the set of factors that impact positive

English learning outcomes?

5. Are there gender differences in participants' opinions about the impact of different factors on positive English learning outcomes?

2. Methods

2.1. Sampling

A total of 201 students from Turkish high schools and universities took part in this study. There were 81 males (40.3% of the total number of participants) and 120 females (i.e. 59.7% of the total sample). Our participants were between 16 and 25 years old. The arithmetic mean of their age was M = 20.05 and the standard deviation was SD = 1.77.
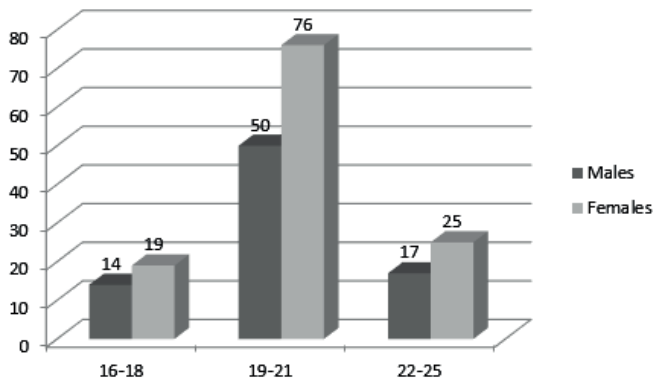
Figure 1. Gender and age distribution of the sample

In the Figure 1, the number of male and female students were displayed across three age groups (16-18 yrs., 19-21 yrs., and 22-25 yrs.). It can be seen (Fig. 1) that most of our participants were between 19 and 21 years old (50 males and 76 females). 33 subjects were between 16 and 18 years old whereas 42 participants were 22-25 years old.

Our subjects speak English quite good, therefore; they were eligible for participation in this research and the content of our psychological instruments have been understood very well.

2.2. Data collection tools

In this research, our participants have been asked which gender they have and how old they are. Then, three scales (instruments) have been applied:

1. *Rosenberg's self-esteem scale* (RSES, Rosenberg, 1965). This instrument consists of ten items (statements), given in the form of Likert's five-point scale. It measures general self-esteem, i.e. the quality of person's self-image (whether someone is considered a valuable person with lots of good qualities or s/he is a

person who is not self-confident). Five out of this 10 items are scored reversely (no. 3, 5, 8, 9, and 10). When the answers for all ten items are added, the total result for every participant is gotten. The range of total scores can be from 10 to 50. The greater the total score, the higher the general self-esteem. In our study, reliability of this scale, expressed as Cronbach's alpha coefficient, is α = .722. Its value is acceptable because self-esteem is a personality trait and in personality tests it is difficult to reach high reliability (greater reliabilites are more common for intelligence tests).

2. *Metacognitive strategies scale (MCSS,* Aydoğan & Akbarov, 2014). This scale includes seven questions (items) which represent different metacognitive strategies (e.g. controlling thoughts related and not related to the learning topic; managing emotions; motivating oneself during learning activities...). Participants are asked how successfully they use these metacognitive strategies on a 7-point Likert scale. Single scores for every item can be calculated, or total score for the entire scale. By PCA, one latent component was extracted and labeled ''metacognitive group of learning strategies''. The reliability (internal consistency) coefficient of MCSS was α = .654. After the item has been ecluded: ''...manage one's thinking process (on the learning subject)'', Cronbach's alpha coefficient increased (α = .677). Therefore, the rest six items of this scale have been kept and conducted statistical analyses on them.

3. *A list of factors that impact English learning outcomes* (Aydoğan, 2014). The mentioned scale was composed for the purpose of this research. It consists of five items (groups of factors):

- Student's individual learning effort,
- Teacher's educational skills,
- Collaborating with other students,
- Communicating with native English speakers, and
- Watching English TV programs and listening to English music.

Participants have had to indicate how important every listed factor is for good English learning outcomes. This has been done on the 5-point Likert scale, where 1 means ''not important at all'' and 5 means ''absolutely important''.

2.3.Procedure

This research was conducted via Internet. Participants filled out the questionnaire form for 5-10 minutes. The answers were being automatically registered at one of the available survey platforms (online softwares). First, the database was made in MS Excel then it was transferred into SPSS for Windows, version 17.0. Parametric statistical procedures have been conducted, where both descriptive and inferential techniques of data analysing have been applied. Among inferential techniques (i.e. the methods of making statistical conclusions), Pearson's correlational coefficient (r) and its significance, coefficient of determination (r^2), and t-test for independent samples with its significance have been used. In addition, to display the relation between self-confidence and metacognitive strategies graphically, the scatter diagram has been

formed where every dot represents the particular result (score) of each participant. The study was performed and guided by ethical principles of our profession. Students participated voluntarily and their anonymity was guaranteed.

3. Findings

In order to examine average values, variability and range of our data, we have calculated arithmetic means (*M*), standard deviations (*SD*), minimum (*Min*) and maximum (*Max*) values. These values, calculated for general self-esteem and metacognitive strategies are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive values of general self-esteem and metacognitive strategies

| Variables	M	SD	Min	Max
General self-esteem (total scores)	42.45	4.13	23	49
Metacognitive strategies (overall)	32.61	3.97	17	39
Controlling feelings	5.63	1.01	3	7
Controlling thoughts (not related to learning subject)	5.48	1.03	3	7
Using learning strategies	5.52	1.13	2	7
Setting learning goals	5.26	1.14	3	7
Achieving learning goals	5.25	1.06	2	7
Motivating oneself during learning	5.47	1.04	3	7

From Table 1, it is clear that our participants' average score for general self-esteem is higher (*M* = 42.45) than the theoretical average value on this scale (i.e. 30). The minimal score was 23 and the maximal 49 (i.e. this is narrower range of data than theoretical, which is 10 - 50). The subjects' average score on the Metacognitive strategies scales was *M* = 32.61 (it is also higher than theoretical average whose value is 24). The minimal result for this scale was 17, whereas the maximal result was 39. On the other hand, the theoretical range of scores is between six and 42. All arithmetic means for the MCSS items are also above the theoretical average value (i.e. higher than the value 4). The highest is for Controlling feelings (*M* = 5.63) and the lowest for Achieving learning goals (*M* = 5.26).

To test the first proposed hypothesis, coefficient of correlation between total scores on Rosenberg's self-esteem scale (RSES) and Metacognitive strategies scale (MCSS) have been calculated. This coefficient was *r* = .379; p < .001. As can be seen, it was statistically significant with an error less than 0.1%. From this coefficient, the coefficient of determination can be calculated which is simply the sqare of the previous value: r^2 = .1436. When it is multiplied by 100, the common (shared) variance percent between these two variables is gotten. Hence, general self-esteem and metacognitive strategies have in common 14.36% of their variance.In the diagram below (Fig. 2), this correlation was displayed graphically.

In Zarei's et al. research (2012), studying the relationship between self-esteem and metacognitive strategies,it was found out that there were significant differences between the pre- and post-test mean scores of the students' self-esteem, their scores in the course,

and their academic success in all the three groups though the results of one-way ANO-VA revealed that there was no significant difference between the self-esteem measures of those students who were taught cognitive and metacognitive strategies as compared to those taught traditionally. However, Zarei (2012) revealed that there were significant differences between their total scores in the course and their academic success measures.
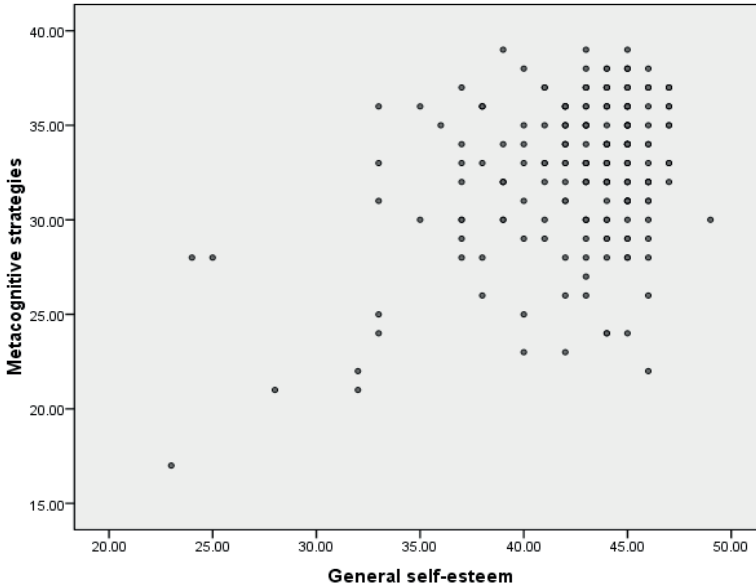
Figure 2. Scatter plot for general self-esteem and metacognitive strategies taken together

From the Figure 2, it can be noticed that most of our participants who scored high on the self-esteem scale also have high scores on the metacognitive strategies scale. There was small number of participants who had low results on both scales. Therefore, based on the significance of the calculated correlational coefficient, the answer to the first research question is positive.

Furthermore, the relations between general self-esteem and various metacognitive strategies (not taken together) were of interest to us. For that purpose, the subjects' results on six different metacognitive strategies (items) with their total results on Rosenberg's self-esteem scale (RSES) were correlated.

It is obvious (Table 2) that all coefficients are positive and statistically significant. Using learning strategies correlates the most with the general self-esteem ($r = .306$, $p < .001$), whereas the smallest correlational coefficient was in the case of setting learning goals ($r = .157$, $p < .05$). Therefore, the answer on the second research question is affirmative, as well.

Table 2. Correlations between general self-esteem and six forms of metacognitive strategies

Metacognitive strategies	General self-esteem
Controlling feelings	.296***
Controlling thoughts (not related to learning subject)	.166*
Using learning strategies	.306***
Setting learning goals	.157*
Achieving learning goals	.236**
Motivating oneself during learning	.251***

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

The next figure displays average values (arithmetic means) for factors which could yield positive English learning outcomes (Fig. 3). These are the following factors: student's individual (independent) effort, teacher's educational skills (i.e. communication, social and teaching characteristics of school and university lecturers), collaborating with other students (group work, team skills, shared learning environment), communicating with native English speakers (capacity for intercultural sensitivity, high social self-esteem, extraversion, social flexibility...), and watching English TV programs and listening to music in English (hobbies and free acitivities which are related to understanding English and testing one's own English vocabulary and grammar).
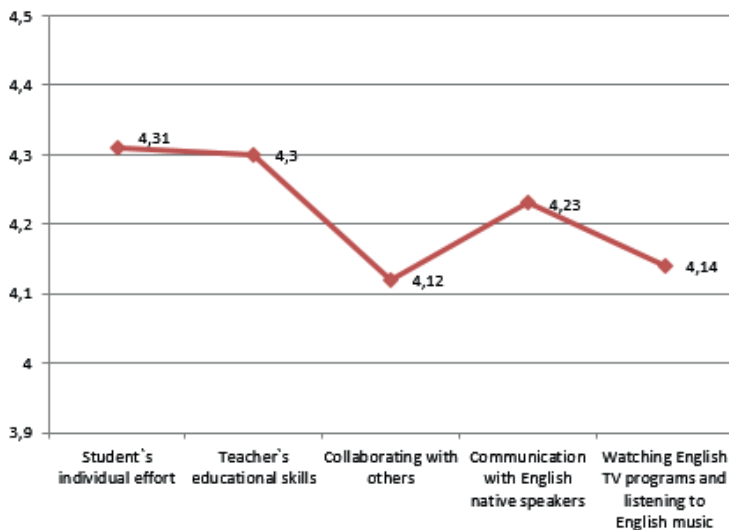
Figure 3. Factors that can impact English learning outcomes

Our participants think (referring to Figure 3) that the most important factor for good English learning outcomes is student's individual effort ($M = 4.31$). A slightly

less important are teacher's educational skills ($M = 4.30$). The following factor is communication with English native speakers ($M = 4.23$), then, watching English programs on TV and listening to English music ($M = 4.14$). Finally, according to our students, the less important factor is collaboration with other peers or colleagues ($M = 4.12$).

These findings suggest that school and university students think that it is mandatory to have good working habits, to invest great effort, to have motivation for learning English and to have very skilled English teachers. The outcome of these characteristics, conditions and activities will yield overall success in learning English (very good school grades, developed English language skills and capacity for its usage in everyday context).

Further, the self-esteem and metacognitive strategies with students' opinion on the previous five factors have been correlated.

Table 3. General self-esteem, metacognitive strategies and factors that influence English learning outcomes

	GSE	CF	CNT	ULS	SLG	ALG	MDL
Student's individual learning effort	-.063	.106	.129	.088	.027	.002	-.068
Teacher's educational skills	-.083	.090	-.025	-.025	-.027	-.085	-.194*
Collaborate with other students	.209*	.054	-.024	.021	.019	-.021	-.084
Communication with native English speakers	.359**	.074	.102	.065	.034	.094	-.030
Watching English programs and listening to English music.	.341**	.030	.023	.138	.115	.190*	.000

* p < .01, ** p < .001; GSE- general self-esteem; CF – controlling feelings, CNT – controlling not related thoughts; ULS – using learning strategies; SLG – setting learning goals; ALG – achieving learning goals; MDL – motivation during learning

It can be noticed (Table 3) that there are just some correlational coefficients which are statistically significant. General self-esteem positively correlates with collaborating with other students ($r = .209, p < .01$), communicating with native English speakers ($r = .359, p < .001$), and with watching English programs/listening to English music ($r = .341, p < .001$). This finding can be explained through social self-esteem which is a component of the general self-esteem. People wo have greater social self-esteem collaborate and communicate with others more frequently. Moreover, they have more fun and they are open to new experiences. So, they prefer watching English channels and listen to English music.

Achieving learning goals is in a positive, statistically significant correlation with watching English TV programs and listening to English music ($r = .190, p < .01$). That is probably because achieving learning goals means to them: being able to apply and use English in everyday context (such as watching English TV series).

On the other hand, motivating oneself during learning negatively correlates with the importance which s/he gives to teacher's educational skills ($r = -.194, p < .01$).

Therefore, students think that motivating themselves cannot be achieved through the help of their teacher. The usage of this metacognitive strategy mostly depends on their own skills. Based on the previous results, we can conclude that the answer to the third and fourth research questions is mostly negative.

The gender differences in the light of previously mentioned factors have also been examined. The results of t-test for independent samples are in Table 4. Obviously (Table 4), none of the t-values are statistically significant (their values ranged from $t = 0.54$ to $t = 1.74$, where p-values were from .590 to .084).

Table 4. T-test results for examining gender differences in factors relevant for good English learning outcomes

Factors	*M*	*SD*	ΔM	$SE_{\Delta M}$	*T*	*df*	*P*
Student's individual learning effort	4.35* 4.28**	0.71 0.86	0.07	0.12	0.54	199	.590
Teacher's educational skills	4.43 4.21	0.80 0.95	0.22	0.13	1.74	199	.084
Collaborating with other students	4.26 4.02	0.89 1.06	0.24	0.14	1.64	199	.103
Communicating with native English speakers	4.28 4.19	0.82 0.92	0.09	0.13	0.73	199	.468
Watching English programs & listening to English music.	4.22 4.09	0.95 0.99	0.13	0.14	0.93	199	.351

Note. M –arithmetic mean; SD – standard deviation; ΔM – mean difference, $SE_{\Delta M}$– standard error of the mean difference; t – t-statistic; df – degrees of freedom, p – significance;* the first value refers to males; ** the second value refers to females.

It must be mentioned that in the case of teacher's educational skills p-value was close to the marginal value ($p = .084$ vs. the marginal: $p = .05$). This finding means that we will probably get statistically significant gender differences on a larger sample than ours. Finally, these findings point to a negative answer to the last research question.

4. Results and Discussion

As mentioned before, general self-esteem positively correlated with metacognitive strategies. We can explain this result in two directions: First, higher general self-esteem is one of the factors which impact successful usage of metacognitive strategies. Second, effective usage of metacognitive strategies could increase someone's general self-esteem. These are the typical explanations because correlational studies (such as ours) do not permit causal inference, i.e. one-directional relationship between examined variables. The next explanation includes the notion that students with high levels of general self-esteem will believe in their cognitive abilities and will try to prove to themselves that they can master subject materials. Thus, they will use different learning strategies in order to achieve the learning goals they set. Our findings were

in accordance with those obtained by Zarei, Shokrpour, Nasiri and Kafipour (2012). These authors got differences in self-esteem between the group of students who were using cognitive and metacognitive strategies successfully and those who were not doing so. Our findings were also consistent with those obtained in a recent study conducted by Ahour and Hassanzadeh (2015). Our study also confirms the results of the study carried out by Asadifard and Biria (2013) that was described in the introductory part of this paper.

Another similar study by Dev and Qiqieh (2016) to find out the relationship between English Language proficiency, self-esteem and academic achievement of the students in Abu Dhabi University indicated that it was observed that language proficiency and self-esteem are actually negatively correlated claiming that they are indirectly associated with academic achievement, to our surprise. The results of their study could not also observe any association among language proficiency, academic achievement and self-esteem.

Not all correlations between general self-esteem and factors that impact positive English learning outcomes were statistically significant. The reason for that is the nature of self-reported general self-esteem. Students (or people in general) could think that they possess great abilities, skills, personality traits and competences. However, these are their subjective perceptions and opinions. In reality, they probably do not possess great levels of intelligence, competence, motivation or abilities. This is why some of the aforementioned factors did not correlate significantly with general self-esteem.

Apart from these findings, some of them were in positive and statistically significant correlation with students' general self-esteem (collaborating with other students, communicating with native English speakers and watching English TV channels as well as linstening to English music). They probably have high levels of social self-esteem which is one of the subordinate aspects of general self-esteem. Because they are self-confident in social interactions, they communicate and collaborate with their schoolmates and native English speakers. As a matter of fact, they are outgoing persons who are eager to entertain themselves (this is why they listen to a lot of music and often watch TV). MacIntyre, Dornyei, Clement, and Noels (1998) found that global self-esteem boosts students' willingness to communicate in foreign language (no matter whom they are communicate with – their classmates or English native speakers). The other possible reason for the general self-esteem's positive correlation with watching English channels and listening to English music is the following one: students with high levels of general self-esteem believe they can understand what is going on in English movies, shows, and music (despite the fact that they probably do not have sufficiently developed English vocabulary). Additionally, they presumably think that foreign music, movies and shows will make them distinguishable and more worthy compared to their peers. By doing so, they will be more competent and more able to communicate in foreign language than their friends, acquaintances, siblings, etc.

Next, metacognitive strategies were not in statistically significant correlations with factors influencing positive English learning outcomes (with the exception of teachers' educational skills withmotivating oneself during learning as well as watching English programs and listening to English music with achieving learning goals). In line with this, it can be said that students find it hard to make connections between the benefit of metacognitive strategies and other important factors of desirable English learning outcomes. Hence, teachers should encourage them to perceive English learning classroom processes as mutually correlated. By employing different strategies and participating various learning activities, students will be able to perform better and consequently achieve positive academic goals. Goos and Galbraith (1996) highlighted some benefits from using metacognitive strategies while collaborating with other classmates; however, these researchers concluded that students find it difficult to use this kind of learning strategies while participating in such collaborative activities.

We, as researchers and practitioners (teachers) in this field, should be aware of some problems that can be summarized in this way: some students are predominantly extrinsically motivated whereas the others are instrinsically motivated (e.g. Ryan & Deci, 2000); lots of students prefer to do activities that are not strongly related to school subjects (i.e. they will prefer watching English programs, interracting with English-speaking people, etc. to sitting in the classroom, using learning strategies and listening to their teachers); they want to enjoy activities they participate (however, the context of education usually offers a boring, non-stimulative learning atmosphere, e.g. Faraday, Overton, & Cooper, 2011)...

As for gender differences (the last finding of this study), it was found out that they were not statistically significant. Therefore, male and female students reported similar levels of their individual effort. This result differs from that obtained by Liu and Wang (2005). This incongruence in findings can be justified by the fact that these authors conducted their research in a cultural context (Singapore)that is different from ours. Additionally, males and females similarly assessed their teachers' educational skills. Males and females similarly collaborate with other students and communicate with native English speakers. Their English TV-channels-watching and English-music-listening habits are pretty alike, as well. These findings can be explained by the tendencies of our postmodern society. In democratic societies, gender equality is advocated and contemporary teachers are trying to devote their attention to both male and female students. Accordingly, they are almost equally motivated, supported and treated.

5. Conclusion

The research has resulted in the following findings: general self-esteem is in a positive and statistically significant correlation with students' usage of metacognitive strategies; it positively correlates with various metacognitive strategies; in addition, it is in positive correlations with collaborated learning, communication with native Eng-

lish speakers, and with watching English TV channels and listening to English music. The capacity for self-motivation during learning acitivities correlates negatively with teacher's educational skills, however, achieving learning goals correlates positively with watching English TV programs and listening to English music. There are no gender differences in importance of factors that can impact English learning outcomes.

The study should encourage teachers in all levels of education to help students learn about metacognitive strategies (and their application) as well as to boost their general (global) self-esteem (but without exaggeration). The research has been limited with the general self-esteem but instead academic self-esteem and self-efficacy can also be used with language learning strategies. As the general self-esteem is a significant criteria of verbal expressiveness, communicative and linguistic competence in foreign language learning, it has been referred as an attitude towards the self.

This study contributes to the field of learning and teaching English as a second/ foreign language (ESL/EFL) in the following manner: It is clear that general self-esteem as a personality trait contributes to the use of metacognitive strategies among high school and university students. Frequent use of metacognitive strategies enhance students' general self-esteem. This kind of reciprocity is present due to the fact that our study was a correlational one. The second contribution is related to statistically non-significant gender differences, that is, ESL/EFL learning/teaching is not a gender-specific phenomenon. In other words, these processes can be designed and planned for all students, regardless of their gender.

The chief advantage of the study is its attempt to describe complex relatioships between various educational factors and concepts. Its main limitation is the nature of self-report measures (techniques). This is to say that students could answer the scale questions subjectively by giving socially-desirable responses. Hence, they could be skilled in self-impression management and provide a sort of ''customized'' responses. Another limitation includes *A list of factors that impact English learning outcomes.* Each factor that could have influence on English learning outcomes is represented by a single item. In future studies, researchers should develop a more comprehensive measure with higher number of items.

Farther studies related to the field can examine correlations between general intelligence, academic self-esteem and the frequency of usage of metacognitive strategies. They can also examine differences in academic effort, motivation and metacognitive strategies between students of natural and social sciences (e.g. mathematics students vs. psychology students).

6. References

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