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The role of positive emotions and type of feedback in self-regulation of learning goals achievement: experimental research

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Abstract

This study examined the role of positive and negative emotions in self-regulation of experimental tasks performing and academic achievement, taking into account intentionally organized feedback. We used computerized diagnostic complex, which simulates different learning activity contexts and provides data about students' regulatory and personal characteristics, goals achievement strategies and dynamic of test results. It includes Self-Regulation Profile Questionnaire (SRPLQM, Morosanova) to diagnose students' self-regulation stylistic features. The sample group consisted of eighty eight 13-15 years old students of Russian State secondary schools. The obtained results allow us to state that in case of high cognitive activity and achievement motivation positive emotions play a key role in maintaining high academic success and engagement. If cognitive activity and achievement motivation are at the middle level, it is the self-regulation that determines the student' success, while positive emotions are not of significant importance. A combination of lower cognitive activity, middle self-regulation and low achievement motivation makes negative emotions a significant factor of underachieving at school. We found strong support for our hypothesis that feedback plays an important role in goals achievement, especially for students, whose self-regulation capacity is at a low or medium level.

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Keywords: conscious self-regulation; cognitive activity; positive emotions; feedback; academic achievement

1. Introduction

Currently psychologists as well as teachers are increasingly focusing on students' subjective well-being. Balance of positive and negative affect underlies this phenomenon (Bradburn, 1969; Diener, 2012).Recent advances in

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psychology and neurosciences demonstrate that emotions are crucial contributors to students' motivation, interpersonal resources, memory, learning and academic achievements (Lewis, Haviland-Jones, & Barrett, 2008; Valiente, Swanson, & Eisenberg, 2012). Weiner, based on theoretical analysis, has produced a sizable number of studies on the cognitive antecedents of achievement-related emotions (Weiner, 1985).

Traditionally negative emotions receive more investigative attention, because they are perceived as the more troublesome for human functioning and development. The analysis of the reviews shows that out of one thousand studies of negative emotions, usually anxiety, only one study covers positive emotions. The obtained empirical data does not allow us to estimate the contribution of positive emotions to academic achievement. While Pekrun in the longitudinal research found that test anxiety and academic achievement were linked by reciprocal causation (positive feedback loops) throughout the school years from Grades 5 to 10 (Pekrun et al., 2002).

Investigators studying adults' positive emotions indicate their supporting role in phenomena of engagement, intrinsic motivation, satisfaction and flow (Fredrickson, 2001; Bakker, Demerouti, 2007; Schaufeli et al, 2002). The question whether it is possible to replicate these effects on learning activity remains unexplored. The few studies of the role of positive emotions in learning goals achievement show that joy, hope, and pride positively correlate with students' academic self-efficacy, academic interest and effort, and overall achievement (Pekrun et al., 2002).

Several studies have confirmed that positive emotions predict a facilitation of students' learning activity (Rothbart & Bates, 2006) and enhance academic competence (Fredrickson, 2001). High intensity of positive emotions has been identified as one of dysregulating factor of learning goals achievement (Sallquist et al., 2009) because of decrease of effortful control (Kochanska, Murray, & Harlan, 2000) and increase in problem behaviors (Dennis, Hong, & Solomon, 2010). Another potential explanation for the indirect relationship between positive emotions and academic achievement can be provided through activation. Pekrun's cognitive-motivational model proposes to differentiate positive activating emotions (such as enjoyment of learning, hope for success, or pride) and positive deactivating emotions (e.g., relief, relaxation after success, contentment) (Pekrun et al., 2002).

To broaden the knowledge of the role of positive emotions in learning goals achievement we chose to focus on cognitive processes, namely conscious self-regulation. Researchers have suggested self-regulation to be an essential factor in students' academic achievement (Boekaerts, Pintrich, & Zeidner, 2005; Zimmerman, 2001; Morosanova, Fomina, & Bondarenko, 2015). However, there is no common understanding of what a phenomenon of self-regulation is and which features are to be considered self-regulation components. Most researchers focus on goal setting—the ability to set learning goals (Schunk, 1994; Zimmerman, 2001). Other scientists analyze its volitional (Corno, 2001) and cognitive (Butler, & Winne, 1995) aspects. In Russia the problem of interrelationship between self-regulation and academic achievement is considered in the context of cognitive psychology or viewed as a meta-cognitive process that organizes learning by coordinating primary cognitive processes.

We define self-regulation of learning activity as a system of self-conscious mental activity used to set educational goals and achieve results, corresponding to those objectives. Individual student's self-regulation can be characterized by a self-regulation profile, including indicators of cognitive functional processes: Goal planning, Modelling of significant conditions, Programming of actions, Results evaluation and instrumental personal-regulatory features: Flexibility, Independence, Reliability, Responsibility, etc. (Morosanova, 2013).

The theory of SRL (Self-Regulation Learning) (Zimmerman, 2001) affirms the substantial contribution of situational determinants to students' learning goals achievement. Researchers note that it is impossible to evaluate the level of students' self-regulation if they perform only the usual learning activities (Konopkin, 2004; Valiente, Swanson, & Eisenberg, 2012). Therefore, it seems impossible to assess the impact of emotions on academic success without taking into account the mediating role of self-regulation in various atypical situations new tasks. Therefore, we developed new software with game-like experimental tasks, "Diagnosis of situational specificity of self-regulation (DSSSR)". This method allows us to compare current manifestation of self-regulation when performing tasks of varying complexity with self-esteemed self-regulation, and to assess the results dynamics of tasks with different type of feedback. Previous studies have shown that feedback is one of the key factors in the system of learning activity regulation (Konopkin 2004; Butler, & Winne, 1995; Pekrun, 2002; Hattie, & Timperley, 2007).

We aim to study the role of positive emotions in self-regulation of completing experimental tasks and academic achievement. We expected that self-regulation might have an influence on learning results in different ways. In line

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