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Edited by Paul Collett and Kristen Sullivan

Special Issue on Self-Regulation in Foreign Language Learning

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SiSAL Journal is planning to publish an ongoing column entitled *Language Learning Spaces: Self-Access in Action*, over several issues, from June 2015 (Volume 6, Issue 2) More details here: http://sisaljournal.org/for-authors/learning_spaces/ DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS: February 10th, 2015.

Editorial

Kristen Sullivan, Shimonoseki City University, Japan

Paul Collett, Shimonoseki City University, Japan

The idea for this special issue on self-regulation in foreign language learning arose from a symposium we held from December 7-8, 2013, at Shimonoseki City University. We convened the symposium with the support of a grant-in-aid for scientific research from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. This grant was awarded to help with the investigation of the use of supplementary learning materials designed to develop language learners' self-regulatory strategies, a four year research project that is nearing conclusion. The aim of the symposium was not so much to showcase our own work, but to create an opportunity to learn from others and to share findings from practice and research. Through our participation at various conferences reporting on the results of our project, we had come to realize that there was significant interest in the application of self-regulated learning to foreign language studies, and, indeed, that there was a growing body of people engaged in research and educational practices related to this topic. We also noticed that many

people involved in learner autonomy and self-directed learning were reporting findings similar to our own, so we were interested in achieving some sort of collaboration or discussion between educators working in these fields. The symposium brought up many issues which have influenced our own research and practices, and we hope that by sharing this with the wider community that the conversation will continue to grow.

Self-Regulation in Foreign Language Learning: Shared Perspectives Symposium Presentations

Day One (December 7, 2013)
Instructor as guide: Goal-setting and reflection by Caroline Hutchinson
Incorporating learner beliefs awareness-raising into a self-regulated language learning course by Katherine Thornton
The social dimensions of learner autonomy and self-regulated learning (Keynote) by Garold Murray
Developing autonomous self-regulated readers in an extensive reading program by J. Lake & Trevor Holster
The teacher's role in fostering learner autonomy by Chris Fitzgerald & Martin Mullen
Connectedness to facilitate autonomous learning by Fergus O'Dwyer
Helping students succeed in freshman English: What works? by Stella Millikan

Day Two (December 8, 2013)
Learning from student understandings of self-regulated learning materials for foreign language classes by Paul Collett & Kristen Sullivan
Teachers' perspectives of freshman students' needs in relation to self-directed language learning by Akiyuki Sakai & Atsumi Yamaguchi
Understanding our learners: What facilitates and impedes their self-regulation in foreign language learning (Keynote) by Yoshiyuki Nakata
Investigating the relationship among self-efficacy, self-regulation strategy use, and English vocabulary learning by Sakae Onoda
Developing a narrative-based method for student researchers investigating peer attitudes to continuing English study by Neil McClelland

The articles in this special issue represent a diverse range of approaches to the investigation of self-regulation in foreign language learning. While most of the articles do not deal specifically with self-access contexts, we believe that the ideas discussed are applicable to various domains of teaching and learning. In their featured articles, **Garold Murray** and **Yoshiyuki Nakata** offer two different theoretical reviews of the relationship between self-regulation and learner autonomy, which we feel will bring greater understanding of the respective concepts, and how they interrelate. The research articles by **Sakae Onoda** and **De Lourdes Rico-Cruz** and

Magdalena Ávila Pardo both consider contextual factors contributing to self-regulated learning, but from very different theoretical approaches. What we would particularly like to highlight are the analytical methods used in these two articles: structural equation modeling and discourse analysis, respectively. We hope these articles point towards possibilities for researching self-regulation.

This issue also introduces several descriptions of practice which should provide insight into how the reader can approach the development of self-regulated learning abilities in his or her own teaching environment. **Caroline Hutchinson** describes a curriculum renewal project of an independent learning course which was conducted to recognize and incorporate the importance of teacher guidance in developing independent learners. **J. Lake** and **Trevor Holster** outline how a technologically-mediated approach to extensive reading can help develop reading gains while also promoting self-regulation. **Fergus O'Dwyer** and **Judith Runnels** place the spotlight on writing, introducing a process writing course that incorporates self-regulated learning cycles which work to not only develop learners' writing skills, but also their ability to take control of their learning both now and in the future. **Carla Wilson** highlights the relationship between formative assessment and self-regulated learning, and describes her own classroom practices for supporting learner development in conversation courses.

In our papers, we have reflected on issues that have arisen in our own research and practice. **Paul Collett** highlights matters related to the research of self-regulation in foreign language learning. **Kristen Sullivan** considers the issue of learner assessment in courses aiming to develop learners' self-regulated learning abilities, and draws attention to links between self-regulated learning and learning-oriented assessment.

Finally, **Katherine Thornton** reports on the *Self-regulation in foreign language learning: Shared perspectives* symposium. Going beyond a simple review, she discusses how presentations at the symposium led her to reflect upon her own practices as a learner advisor, and she provides her own take on the relationship between learner autonomy and self-regulated learning. For those new to the concept of self-regulated learning, Katherine's piece may be a good entry point to this special issue.

Please note that papers appear in alphabetical order by author surname.

We would like to share our appreciation to all involved in the creation of this special issue. Firstly, a huge thanks to all of those who presented at and attended the symposium, and to all of our writers who have worked tirelessly on their contributions to this issue. Next, thank you to the reviewers whose insightful comments greatly aided the writers in shaping their finished papers. Reviewers are listed here in alphabetical order: Steve Brown, Neil Curry, Kerstin Dofs, Moria Hobbs, Jane Kehrwald, J. Lake, Paul Lyddon, Ann Mayeda, Garold Murray, Heath Rose, Alison Stewart, and Katherine Thornton. We are also extremely thankful to our copyeditors and proofreaders whose attention to detail really helped to polish the contributions to this special issue: Bethan Kushida, Elton LaClare, Phoebe Lyon, David McLoughlin, Jo Mynard, and Rob Werner. An extra special thanks to Rob Werner for double-checking the references of all articles.

Finally, we would like to offer special thanks to Jo Mynard for giving us the chance to edit this special issue. Her generosity, guidance, and patience made this special issue possible. We have learned so much through this experience, and thank her for the opportunity.

The Social Dimensions of Learner Autonomy and Self-Regulated Learning

Garold Murray, Okayama University, Japan

Abstract

This paper examines how learner autonomy and self-regulated learning might be related by comparing and contrasting the two constructs. After identifying the traits learner autonomy and self-regulated learning have in common, I argue that in order to understand how they differ we have to look beyond a discrete point comparison of their features. Given that both areas of inquiry have been broadening their focus on the individual learner to include greater recognition of the role of the social environment in the learning process, I expand the scope of my analysis to include their social dimensions. In the ensuing discussion, I explore the notion that their social dimensions encompass emotional, spatial and political dimensions. To illustrate my points, I draw on data from an ethnographic inquiry investigating the experiences of Japanese English foreign language learners participating in a social language learning space on the campus of a large national university. The paper concludes by examining the implications of this theoretical discussion for pedagogical practice and further inquiry.

Keywords: learner autonomy, self-regulated learning, space and place, social learning spaces, imagination, emotions, pedagogy

In the literature on learner autonomy in language learning it is not uncommon to see references to self-regulated learning. These references suggest a tendency to conflate the two constructs. This is not surprising given that on the surface learner autonomy and self-regulated learning appear to be similar in as much as both emphasize learner control and metacognition. Nonetheless, they remain two separate areas of inquiry. What is surprising, given their shared interests, is the lack of attempts to examine how the two might be related, how they differ, and how research in one area might inform work in the other (for exceptions, Lewis & Vialleton, 2011; Loyens, Magda, & Rikers, 2008).

The principal aim of this paper is to examine how learner autonomy and self-regulated learning might be related by comparing and contrasting the two constructs. In doing so, it will be demonstrated that in order to understand how these two constructs differ, we have to look beyond a discrete point comparison of their features. Over the past twenty years, work in both areas of inquiry has gradually broadened the focus on the individual learner to include increased recognition of the importance of the social context and interaction in the learning process. In this paper,

I argue that in order to understand the relationship between learner autonomy and self-regulated learning, we need to expand the scope of our analysis to include their social dimensions. Therefore, I will look at three questions: 1) In what ways are learner autonomy and self-regulated learning similar or different? 2) What are the social dimensions of learner autonomy and self-regulated learning? 3) What are the implications for pedagogical practice and research in both areas? To illustrate various points in the discussion, the paper draws on data from an ethnographic study investigating the experiences of Japanese English foreign language learners participating in a social learning space on the campus of a large national university (Murray & Fujishima, 2013; Murray, Fujishima, & Uzuka, 2014). Rather than provide definitive answers, the intent is to open up a discussion of these questions, to draw attention to related issues, and to explore directions for future research and pedagogical innovation.

Comparing and Contrasting Learner Autonomy and Self-Regulated Learning

In order to understand the relationship between learner autonomy and self-regulated learning, I begin by looking at key definitions of the constructs. Holec (1981) provided the area of learner autonomy in language learning with its seminal definition, "the ability to take charge of one's learning" (p. 3). For Holec, this meant assuming responsibility for all aspects of the learning process, including setting goals, selecting materials, deciding on activities and strategies, monitoring progress and assessing outcomes. More recently, Benson (2011) has modified Holec's definition to read "the capacity to take control of one's own learning" (p. 58), contending that the construct of "control" is more amenable to empirical investigation than "to take charge". Perhaps an equivalent seminal definition in the area of self-regulated learning is Zimmerman's (1989) description of the self-regulated learner: "Students can be described as self-regulated to the degree that they are metacognitively, motivationally, and behaviorally active participants in their own learning process" (p. 329). Pintrich (2000) offers insight into what it means to be an active participant in one's own learning when he writes that in academic contexts self-regulation can be understood as a "process whereby learners set goals for their learning and then attempt to monitor, regulate, and control their cognition, motivation, and behavior, guided and constrained by their goals and the contextual features in the environment" (p. 453). From these definitions, one can identify several features that the two

constructs seem to have in common, such as concerns with goal-setting, monitoring learning, and control.

Few attempts have been made to compare learner autonomy and self-regulated learning. Two notable exceptions are Lewis and Vialleton (2011) and Loyens et al. (2008); in the case of the latter the comparison was with self-regulated learning (SRL) and self-directed learning (SDL). SDL can be viewed as a manifestation of learner autonomy in which learners accept responsibility for all the decisions related to their learning (Dickinson, 1987), such as those pertaining to setting goals, selecting materials, determining strategies and activities, monitoring and assessing their learning. As one would suspect, Loyens et al. (2008) concluded that "SDL and SRL have similarities with respect to active engagement, goal-directed behavior, metacognitive skills, and intrinsic motivation" (p. 423). Despite these similarities, they note that the two terms cannot be used interchangeably.

> While SRL is usually considered as a learner characteristic, SDL is both a
> learner characteristic and a design feature of the learning environment.
> Further, SDL entails more student control over the learning environment and
> provides a crucial role for the learner in initiating a learning task. (Loyens et
> al., 2008, p. 423)

Although learner autonomy and self-regulated learning share several key features, they differ over issues pertaining to learner control of the learning context.

Table 1. Comparing Learner Autonomy (LA) and Self-Regulated Learning (SRL)

Characteristics	LA	SRL
Active engagement	✓	✓
Goal-directed behavior	✓	✓
Metacognitive skills	✓	✓
Intrinsic motivation	✓	✓
Learner characteristic	✓	✓
Design feature	✓	?
Learner initiation of learning task	✓(?)	?
Control over the learning environment	?	?

As Table 1 illustrates, the general consensus in the literature is that active engagement and goal-directed learning are features of both learner autonomy and self-

regulated learning. The definitions provided earlier make it quite clear that the development and application of metacognitive skills is a key facet of both – learners need to be able to plan, monitor and assess their learning. Similarly, intrinsic motivation figures prominently in both (cf. Ryan & Deci, 2006; Ushioda, 2007). In addition, self-regulation and autonomy are viewed as learner characteristics; learners can be characterized as being autonomous and self-regulated. However, beyond this point, a comparison of the two constructs starts to become strained (as indicated by the question marks in Table 1).

The differences between learner autonomy and self-regulation start to become apparent when we shift our attention to the learning environment. For example, autonomy can be viewed as a design feature of the learning environment (for a discussion see Benson, 2008). Certain courses are designed in such a way that learners have control over managing their learning and the selection of content (Benson, 2011), which has implications for the pedagogical design as well as the physical design of the learning environment. In contrast, "the extent to which self-regulation resides in the person or in the activity of the person underlies considerable conceptual divergence in the literature on self-regulation" (Martin & McLellan, 2008, p. 436). In regard to learner initiation of the learning task, in SRL there seems to be a general tendency for the teacher to set the learning task and within those parameters students have varying degrees of freedom to select learning strategies and engage in SRL activities. On the other hand, in the area of learner autonomy in accordance with Holec's (1981) model, learners are expected to assume responsibility for determining the learning task. Yet Littlewood's (1999) distinction between proactive autonomy and reactive autonomy weakens this point of comparison. Whereas proactive autonomy reflects Holec's model, reactive autonomy broadens the scope to include contexts in which teachers set the task and learners then take charge and organize their resources. Under this definition of learner autonomy, learners are not always expected to determine the learning task. Although both learner autonomy and self-regulated learning address issues of control to varying extents, the possibility of individual learners exercising control over the learning environment is questionable in social settings, such as classrooms.

Self-regulation and learner autonomy start to diverge at the point where the self meets the social world. Commenting on the relationship between the self and the social world in regard to learner autonomy, Benson (2013) writes, "autonomous

learners are never entirely in control of their language learning….autonomous language learners often find themselves, or willingly place themselves, in situations where they have little direct control over their learning" (p. 87). In both areas of learner autonomy and self-regulated learning, the control learners might have over the learning environment is variable and even doubtful, making it difficult to differentiate between the two constructs on the basis of learner control.

In fact, looking at Table 1, it is difficult to identify differences between the two, which would justify their remaining distinctive areas of inquiry. Yet when viewed in the context of the research traditions they grew out of, they seem to be based on different ways of seeing the world or different mindsets. This notion is supported by the fact that learner autonomy and self-regulation have very different points of origin. In their comparison of learner autonomy and self-regulated learning, Lewis and Vialleton (2011) characterize learner autonomy as a person-centred approach, which developed in Europe in the late 1970s with its roots in "liberal and libertarian theories of learning, such as those propounded by Ivan Illich, Paulo Freire, and Jerome Bruner" (p. 206). On the other hand, note Lewis and Vialleton (2011), self-regulated learning is a branch of educational psychology that emerged from research carried out in the 1960s into processes such as self-reinforcement, goal-setting, self-efficacy and self-evaluation, and was informed by social cognitive theory. This would suggest that perhaps we cannot really understand the relationship between learner autonomy and self-regulated learning by doing a discrete point comparison, and should therefore consider the approaches from a broader perspective.

Huang and Benson (2013) argue that if we want to understand learner autonomy we need to identify not only its components, but also its dimensions. They then proceed to break down the two key elements of the definition: capacity and control. They see the capacity to control learning as being comprised of three components: 1) *ability*, which refers to knowledge and skills such as those required to plan, monitor and evaluate learning; 2) *desire*, which implies motivation, and 3) *freedom*. They characterize freedom as "the degree to which learners are 'permitted' to control their learning, either by specific agents in the learning process" (Huang & Benson, 2013, p. 9) or by features of the learning situation. From my dual perspective as a teacher and researcher working in the area of learner autonomy, I view self-regulated learning as being most clearly associated with the component of *ability*. There is evidence in the literature of this view being shared by other researchers. For

example, in a recent study investigating the effects of strategy-based instruction on the promotion of learner autonomy, Nguyen and Gu (2013) conceptualize learner autonomy as a combination of learner self-initiation, i.e. "volition and willingness to learn" (p. 13), and self-regulation with its focus "on the learner's strategies and skills of metacognitive self-management, such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating" (p. 13). Benson (2011) also supports this view, noting that research in self-regulated learning can help educators interested in learner autonomy have a better understanding of the cognitive and metacognitive aspects of control over learning. Benson (2011) concludes his discussion of self-regulated learning by stating that "the concept of self-regulation is somewhat narrower than the concept of autonomy" (p. 44).

However, Benson's (2011) comment raises the following question: what basis of comparison might one use in order to conclude that learner autonomy is a broader concept than self-regulation? I would argue that to make such a comparison one needs to broaden the focus on the individual learner – with his or her cognitive, metacognitive, and affective processes – to encompass the learner's social environment. Therefore, I propose that to better understand the relationship between self-regulation and learner autonomy we need to expand the comparison to the level of the social dimension. This leads me to my second question: What are the social dimensions of learner autonomy and self-regulated learning? Before I address this question, I would like to introduce a study, which has informed this paper.

Social Learning Space Study

For the past five years my colleagues and I have been carrying out an ethnographic inquiry exploring the language learning opportunities, or affordances, available in a social learning space called the L-Café (formerly the English Café), located on the campus of a large national university in Japan (Murray & Fujishima, 2013; Murray et al., 2014). This study is germane to the present discussion for two reasons: firstly, because it has been a vehicle for alerting my colleagues and myself to the social dimensions of learner autonomy and self-regulation; and secondly, because data from the study will be helpful in illustrating some of the points I will be making.

The original idea behind the English Café was to provide a facility where Japanese students could practice their language skills. However, this meant welcoming international students who wanted to improve their Japanese and who

brought with them other languages. Hence, the English Café has evolved into the Language Café, or L-Café. As a part of our five-year project to explore the role this facility plays in language learning on campus, we are tracking the language learning trajectories of 13 Japanese EFL learners from their first to fourth year.

In our study we are taking an ecological approach (van Lier, 2004) and treating the L-Café as an eco-social system (Lemke, 2002), which we are exploring from different levels or scales. For example, we are looking at the individual students as part of this system, and at the L-Café as nested within larger systems, e.g. the Language Education Center, which is itself nested within the university as an institution. In addition, we are taking different time scales into account, such as individual semesters, the eight-month period during which exchange students frequent the L-Café, and the four-year period required for students to fulfil their degree requirements. In order to consider the affordances for language learning that emerge in this environment, we interview the participants and L-Café workers every six months, do participant observation, and administer questionnaires to all L-Café users once a year. We have been carrying out an ongoing thematic analysis of the data, the results of which I will draw on as I discuss the social dimensions of learner autonomy and self-regulated learning.

The Social Dimensions of Learner Autonomy and Self-regulation

Because of the strong focus self-regulated learning and learner autonomy have had on the capacities of the individual learner, it is important to establish that there is actually a social dimension to both. A review of the literature reveals that educators working in the areas of learner autonomy and self-regulated learning seem to have been on a parallel path, gradually moving towards increased recognition of their social dimensions. This transformation is in large measure due to the influence of sociocultural approaches in education, stemming from the work of Vygotsky (1978).

In the area of learner autonomy, Little (2000) has promoted the notion that learner autonomy can be developed in social contexts, i.e. the language classroom, through interdependence and collaboration. Little was no doubt influenced by the work of Dam (1995) in Denmark who was promoting learner autonomy in her mixed-ability, middle school English classes. Dam required her students to set individual goals, but to achieve them the learners worked collaboratively in small groups. She encouraged her learners to find good learning activities, share them and evaluate

them. For Little, Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development (ZPD) offered an explanation for the connection between autonomy, interdependence and collaboration. The ZPD refers to that metaphorical space between what learners are able to do on their own and what they are able to do through the help of a more knowledgeable or experienced other. By getting help in the present, learners are able to do things on their own later, and, hence, become more autonomous. Bridging the gap between learner autonomy and self-regulated learning, a Finnish scholar well known for his work on experiential learning has this to say: "The tasks that pupils can do on their own are within their area of self-regulation. The development in the zone thus proceeds from other-regulation to self-regulation, towards increased autonomy" (Kohonen, 2010, p. 6).

Early conceptualizations of self-regulated learning identified a social component, but the social has been more or less a backdrop against which the "real" learning and individual development took place. For example, Zimmerman's (1989) early social cognitive model of SRL recognized that learners would need to monitor and adapt to changes in their physical and social environments; nonetheless, the focus was on the learner's cognitive processes. However, times are changing. As Hadwin and Oshige (2011) note, "emerging perspectives of SRL move beyond Zimmerman's (1989) earlier conception of social context being a component…toward social being at the core of SRL" (p. 242). In self-regulated learning, the social dimension is currently being explored under the labels of co-regulation and socially shared regulation. Hadwin and Oshige (2011) define co-regulation as "a transitional process in a learner's acquisition of self-regulated learning, within which learners and others share a common problem-solving plan, and SRL is gradually appropriated by the individual learner through interactions" (p. 247). They add that "typically, co-regulation involves a student and an other (usually a more capable other, such as a more advanced student, peer tutor, and so on) sharing in the regulation of the student's learning" (p. 247). Hadwin and Oshige (2011) go on to say that "through dialogue and interaction, individuals learn to engage and control their own self-regulatory strategies, evaluations, and processes by observing, requesting, prompting, or experimenting with self-regulation with a supportive other" (p. 248). The processes they are describing appear to be the same as those noted by Little (2000) and Kohonen (2010), which involve work in the ZPD and facilitate the development of

learner autonomy in social settings. According to these scholars, becoming an autonomous, self-regulated learner is largely a social process.

In our study of the L-Café, we see countless examples of students learning through dialogue and interaction. Students often help each other with assignments. Speaking about this in an interview, one of the international student workers said:

For example, if they [Japanese students] ask for a *spelling check* or something like that, you don't just *cross* this out, write something else. You always *explain,* or they *ask you,* 'Why is this *bad?*' So really, I think that they *learn* in that way.

According to Vygotsky (1978), getting explanations and support from a more knowledgeable other is a way of learning. Learners are getting the help they need within their zone of proximal development and through this experience will be better prepared to act more autonomously and self-regulate their learning in the future.

Having examined the role of the social dimension in learner autonomy and self-regulated learning, I would like to look at what this concept might comprise. In the area of learner autonomy, researchers have been turning their attention to the ways in which autonomy is influenced by and/or developed through interaction in social settings; for example, collaborative work in classrooms. Elsewhere, I have suggested that the social dimension of learner autonomy is multifaceted, comprising other dimensions, such as an emotional dimension, a spatial dimension, and a political dimension (Murray, 2014). I would now like to explore these proposed dimensions in relation to learner autonomy and self-regulated learning.

The emotional dimension

From the outset, the emotional dimension has been a component of self-regulated learning models. For example, in Zimmerman's (1989) early social cognitive model he identifies "covert forms" of self-regulation, which refer to learners observing and adapting thoughts and feelings during the learning process. In his later cyclical model (see Zimmerman, 2013 for a discussion) emotion figures in an early phase of the learning process through "self-motivation" and resurfaces in the "self-reflection" phase through "self-reaction" which focuses on satisfaction or dissatisfaction with one's performance. In these models, emotions seem to be internal phenomena related to the individual learner's cognitive and metacognitive processes.

However, as Jang and Iddings (2010) note, "self-regulation has been reconceptualized from successful learners' exemplary qualities to a *social process* in which learners develop and make use of certain cognitive and social skills oriented toward goal attainment through interactions with their surrounding contexts" (p. 351). Not only are emotions often given expression during interaction in social settings, but it is often social settings that give rise to emotions. Damasio, a neuroscientist, identifies what he refers to as social emotions. He writes, "The *social emotions* include sympathy, embarrassment, shame, guilt, pride, jealousy, envy, gratitude, admiration, indignation, and contempt" (Damasio, 2003, p. 45). In a later work he notes, "These emotions are indeed triggered in social situations, and they certainly play prominent roles in the life of groups" (Damasio, 2010, p. 125). The role of emotions in social learning settings remains an under-investigated facet of both self-regulated learning and learner autonomy.

Recently, however, the role of emotions came to the fore in a study exploring the development of autonomy through social interaction and collaboration in a classroom setting. O'Leary (2014), a teacher-researcher in the UK, has carried out a classroom-based research project involving French language learners in an advanced stage of their undergraduate language programme. Her research led her to identify social and emotional dimensions of autonomy. As a result she expanded the standard definition of autonomy in language learning into a model taking these dimensions into account. What follows is an abridged version:

> Autonomy in language learning, within a formal institutional context, depends on the development of learners' psychological and emotional capacity to control their own learning through independent action…and to contribute to the creation of an informational and collegial learning environment…through: the development of the ability to monitor one's own and other's emotions, to discriminate amongst them, and to use the information to guide one's own thinking and action (after Salovey & Mayer, 1990);
> the willingness to take responsibility for the affective dimension of the learning process (after Ushioda, 1996)… (O'Leary, 2014, pp. 20-21)

O'Leary's model of learner autonomy is important because it recognizes and gives prominence to the social and emotional dimensions.

One of the things that we discovered in our social learning space study is that learners need emotional support and continually seek it from others. Speaking about this in an interview, the manager of the facility said:

> Between Japanese students especially, they often talk like, "I can't do listening well, my TOEFL score is not good," and usually the other student gives advice. And it's the same… "You spend more time, you focus on the learning." It's the same, but they repeat so many times. I think they want to be heard, their struggles or their worries or their difficulties.

This quote suggests that learners need to be heard and can benefit from sharing the emotional burden and pressures related to language learning. As learner autonomy and self-regulated learning are reconceptualized in order to give greater prominence to the social, researchers will need to look more closely at the emotional dimension.

The spatial dimension

Another area of learner autonomy and self-regulated learning that requires researchers' attention is the spatial dimension. Shortly after we started the study at the English Café, our participant-observation made it fairly obvious to us that a community was developing. In order to confirm our perceptions, during the interviews we asked participants how they would describe the English Café. They began their answers with, "It's a place to…" or "It's a place where…" some action occurs. At first, this seemed a natural way to respond. Of course it was a place! Then the word "place" began to appear in response to other interview questions, and gradually emerged as category in our data coding process. To better understand this concept, we turned to the literature on space and place in the field of human geography (Cresswell 2004; Harvey 1996; Massey 2005; Tuan, 1977) and work on linguistic/semiotic landscapes (Jaworski & Thurlow 2010), a relatively new area of inquiry in the field of applied linguistics.

The general consensus amongst theorists in these fields is that place is a social construction. As Carter, Donald and Squires (1993) put it, "place is space to which meaning has been ascribed" (p. ix). Interpreting our data through the lens of this fundamental notion led us to conclude that "how learners imagine a space to be, perceive it, define it, and articulate their understandings transforms a space into a

place, determines what they do there, and influences their autonomy" (Murray et al., 2014, p. 81). This idea raises a number of questions that will need to be explored in subsequent inquiries.

For example, research into the spatial dimension of learner autonomy will require re-examining of the notion of control. Benson (2011) has characterized autonomy as control over learning management (cf. Holec, 1981), control over cognitive processing (cf. Little, 1991), and control over content. When we consider the spatial dimension, does autonomy equate to control over the learning space or environment? Our study into one social learning space suggests that it does not. When we asked students in the study what they liked about the social learning space, several replied that they could come and go as they pleased. Their response suggests that these students value their autonomy. Our conclusion from this is that in this social learning space autonomy primarily manifests itself as the possibility for learners to exercise their agency within the environment rather than their control over the environment (Murray et al., 2014). In doing so, autonomy acts as an affordance by making learning opportunities possible. Further exploration of the spatial dimension has the potential to shed light on control as a theoretical construct and, thereby, lead us to see learner autonomy and self-regulated learning in new ways.

While enhanced theoretical understanding would be a welcome outcome of research focusing on the spatial dimension, we must not overlook the potential benefits for pedagogical practice. On the level of practice, there is a need to explore learning spaces with alternative designs that blend physical and virtual spaces. By way of example, I currently deliver a self-directed learning course in a language laboratory and in a computer room. In both venues, the computer "stations" are fixed to the floor, in rows, with little room to move around. When it is time to discuss or collaborate, learners have great difficulty getting together to form anything that even looks remotely like a group. We need learning spaces that actually facilitate communication and collaboration. Decision-makers and administrators in positions of power and authority will have to be convinced of the necessity of moving away from the classroom model of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries toward models better suited to the twenty-first century. Creating these spaces is going to take imagination, and it is also going to take political will.

The political dimension

In contrast to the area of learner autonomy in which there has been discussion of a political dimension (for example, Benson, 1997; Huang & Benson, 2013; Pennycook, 1997; Ushioda, 2008), Martin and McLellan (2008) criticize self-regulation researchers for "selectively ignoring critically important social (including moral and political) dimensions" (p. 444). In view of the current context, one might conclude that self-regulated learning does not have a political dimension, and argue that on this point learner autonomy and self-regulated learning truly part company. However, is it possible to explore the construct of control in a social context without coming up against issues of power? Therefore, a more likely scenario is that the political dimension is present, but under-addressed.

Recent work in the area of learner autonomy provides examples of studies in which the political dimension is not explicitly addressed, yet very much an undercurrent. In one such study, Barfield (2014) traces the development of publishing projects in a teachers' organization, the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) Learner Development Special Interest Group (LD SIG). The underlying theme of the paper is how a group of local teachers managed to break into the world of international publishing; in other words, how teachers doing research or experimenting with ways to provide their learners with alternative learning opportunities had their work recognized and their voices heard by a global audience. A second example comes from Mexico where a researcher has been exploring the relationship between social class and autonomy in self-access language learning (Castillo Zaragoza, 2014). Castillo Zaragoza raises the issue that autonomy may well be a luxury that poor people cannot afford. For one thing, they do not have the range of material resources available to them that more advantaged learners do. However, Palfreyman (2014) reminds us that in addition to material resources there are also discursive resources, the verbalized ideas and beliefs about language learning that circulate in a community. These resources can either encourage or discourage learners from investing in language learning. For example, in Japan, the discourse surrounding globalization and language learning often takes the following form: Japanese students need to learn English in order to take their place in a globalized world. In stark contrast, this is often what the students in my classes tell me: "I don't really need English. I won't use English in my daily life in Japan. I will only use English if I go abroad." There seems to be a disconnect between the highly politicized discourses of globalization and the discourses surrounding language learning that students actually

engage in (for related discussions, see Saito, 2014; Taguchi, 2013; Yashima, 2013). Will students who do not see themselves as needing a language invest a lot of time and effort in learning that language? Will students who do not see themselves ever using a language roll up their sleeves and take control of their learning and self-regulate? There is a political dimension at play, and, as language educators, we cannot afford to ignore this dimension in our theory, research or practice (Ushioda, 2008).

Practice

Addressing the social dimensions of learner autonomy and self-regulated learning has implications for pedagogical practice. In the area of self-regulated learning, a concern has been "whether teachers can adapt their regular classroom activities and assignments to foster increases in their students' SRL" (Zimmerman, 2008, p. 176). This is another point at which learner autonomy and self-regulated learning diverge. Learner autonomy emerged as a field of inquiry as educators experimented with alternative means of meeting language learners' needs, most notably in the area of self-access language learning. From the outset, learner autonomy has been closely linked to pedagogical practice.

The theoretical discussion in this paper leads to three salient points about pedagogical practice in relation to both areas of inquiry. First and foremost, if our goal is to promote autonomy and self-regulation, we need to engage learners in activities that enable them to develop their autonomy and self-regulate their learning. As Little (2000) notes, "the language learner-user will become gradually more autonomous only through the practice of autonomy" (p. 15). Learners become autonomous and self-regulated by doing. As a part of this process, they need the freedom to personalize their learning and exercise their agency. They should be encouraged to set goals that are meaningful to them and to work with materials and carry out activities they find interesting and appropriate. Opportunities for reflection have to be built into the curriculum in every possible way. As a part of the reflection process, learners need to have opportunities to talk about their learning. It is in small group discussions about learning that educators can begin to address the emotional dimension, and perhaps even the political dimension, by working on discursive resources. In other words, it may be possible to openly discuss beliefs and attitudes prevalent in the community that may support or hinder language learning. One of the benefits of these discussions is that students can realize they are not alone – that other

classmates are often feeling and experiencing the same thing. Furthermore, through these discussions they can find the words to express their concerns and questions, which can then be brought to the teacher, if necessary. However, perhaps more importantly, group discussions can provide opportunities for students to learn from each other.

My second point is that we need learning spaces that facilitate activities that promote the development of learner autonomy and self-regulation. These learning spaces will need to be equipped with digital and material resources, while at the same time enabling students to move around and work with each other. The creation of these spaces is going to take political will and imagination.

My third point is that we need to evoke the imagination: our imagination and our students' imagination (see Murray, 2013). In self-regulated learning and learner autonomy, educators try to find ways to foster learners' cognition and metacognition; however, there is a third component that needs to be considered: imagination. In the literature on self-regulation, authors come close to acknowledging the role of imagination. Zimmerman (2013) recognizes the role of mental imagery in his model of SRL and gives examples of using creative visualization as a self-regulatory strategy. As Zimmerman's work would suggest, the processes of cognition, metacognition and imagination are mutually supportive; therefore, we need to exercise all three in our practice.

A starting point for working with cognition, metacognition and imagination is students' identities. As educators we need to find out who our students are, but, more importantly, we need to get *them* thinking about who they are, focusing on their identity in general, and, more specifically, on who they are as language learners. Learning is about identity: past, present, future. A first step could be to have students write short life histories focusing on their language learning. Follow-up activities should focus on the development of students' future selves. At the university level, students are in a compressed phase of metamorphosis. In many cases the transformation is actually visible. As educators, we need to work with that. To this end, another activity might be to have students write anticipated life histories. The prompt might be something like the following: "You are 25 years old and a fluent English speaker. How did you get there? What is your life like? How do you use English?" Work supporting the imagination will have to be sustained in subsequent activities; it is not an activity or a unit that teachers do once in the first class of the

semester. Research will be required to determine if these activities are successful in supporting students' motivation, helping them envision an L2 identity, or steering their discourses surrounding language learning in a positive direction.

Research Implications

In general, future research will need to focus more intently on the social dimensions of learner autonomy and self-regulated learning. In their critical review of the literature on self-regulation, Martin and McLellan (2008) conclude that "what is required is a more thorough going recognition of the constitution of minds and selves within social interactivity with others" (p. 443). More specifically, future inquiries might explore the ways in which interaction can foster or impede the development of self-regulation (Bown, 2009) and autonomy in language learners. There is a need to investigate the shift from social regulation to self-regulation. What role does the learning space play in this shift? What roles do emotions and imagination play?

In addition, there is growing evidence that we should reconsider the construct of control in relation to learner autonomy and self-regulation. Perhaps we need to find other ways to conceptualize and think about learner autonomy and self-regulated learning. Discussing the learning trajectories of two learners of English as a foreign language, Benson (2013) states that their narratives "pose problems for a view of autonomy as 'taking charge of one's own learning' (Holec, 1981, p. 3), because they show quite clearly that autonomous learners are never entirely in control of their language learning" (p. 87). It should be noted that Holec (1981) explained that to take charge of one's learning entailed assuming responsibility for all aspects of the learning process from goal setting to assessment. Taking responsibility for one's learning is not necessarily the same thing as taking control. Citing Bonnett and Cuypers (2003), Benson (2013) explores the notion that "autonomy is essentially a matter of taking responsibility for one's authentic concerns" (p. 86), i.e. concerns that are of special significance given one's personal situation. Whether or not learners will be able to express and pursue their authentic concerns, given the constraints imposed in institutional learning spaces, raises the issue of freedom. In the literature on self-regulated learning, the question has been raised as to whether self-regulated learning is concerned with control *of* the self or control *by* the self (Martin & McLellan, 2008). Control *by* the self implies a degree of freedom. Writing from the perspective of self-determination theory, Ryan and Deci (2006) are very clear: "autonomy literally refers

to regulation by the self" (p. 1557). As researchers engage in a closer examination of control as the basis of learner autonomy and self-regulated learning, they might focus on constructs such as freedom and responsibility.

Research carried out in institutional settings, which entails creating learning environments affording learners greater freedom and encouraging them to accept responsibility for their learning, will be interventionist. Therefore, researchers should consider drawing on approaches that openly acknowledge and discuss their interventionist orientation. For example, they might employ ecological (van Lier, 2004), complexity (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008) and mediated discourse analysis (Scollon & Wong Scollon, 2004) perspectives. While these approaches do not prescribe specific methodologies, they offer guidelines that encourage researchers to consider the nexus of actions, discourses, and identities, and to take into account the place where these elements intersect as well as the influence of varying time scales.

Conclusion

My exploration of the relationship between learner autonomy and self-regulated learning has led me to view them as being two separate areas of inquiry that involve different mindsets. Despite a movement towards social concerns, self-regulated learning research remains primarily concerned with learners' cognitive processes. On the other hand, I see research into learner autonomy as being situated at the interface of self and social worlds. Clearly, self-regulation research into cognitive and metacognitive processes can provide important insights for educators interested in learner autonomy (Benson, 2011). However, I believe that research agendas exploring cognition and metacognition in language learning should be expanded to include the role of the imagination. Researchers should also question the concept of control in relation to both learner autonomy and self-regulated learning. At present, both areas of inquiry are broadening their research focus and giving more attention to their social dimensions. I contend that these social dimensions are multi-faceted and encompass other dimensions such as the emotional, the spatial, and the political. Research agendas exploring these social dimensions have the potential to provide insights that will broaden theoretical understanding of learner autonomy and self-regulated learning, and over time influence practice.

Notes on the contributor

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Self-Regulation: Why is it Important for Promoting Learner Autonomy in the School Context?

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Abstract

Both researchers and practitioners in the field of foreign language education are increasingly interested in the notions of self-regulation and learner autonomy. Indeed, there is a growing body of evidence highlighting the importance of self-regulation in promoting learner autonomy. For many practitioners, an important question to be addressed is how to help learners become more self-regulated in order to promote their learner autonomy. As it stands, however, the majority of learner autonomy research following this line of inquiry has been conducted within the framework of language learning strategies. Although learner autonomy research conducted within the framework of language learning strategies has to some extent contributed to addressing the question above, it has not provided enough guidance to practitioners and practitioner trainers, especially those who are struggling to promote autonomy in their learners in the EFL school context, which is full of constraints and limitations and does not allow much freedom. The present paper attempts to fill this gap, first by comparing the roots and the avenues of development of these two (essentially related but) distinct research areas—self-regulation and learner autonomy—and then by integrating the notion of self-regulation within the theoretical framework of learner autonomy, together with other notions of agency, teacher autonomy and scaffolding.

Keywords: self-regulation, learner autonomy, scaffolding, school context

The concept of learner autonomy has often been referred to as 'a buzz word' in foreign language education (Little, 1991) which has a number of varying definitions (Benson, 2011; Holec, 1981; Little, 1991). In recent years, however, there seems to be a degree of consensus regarding the basic definition of learner autonomy, as can be seen in the remark made by Benson (2011):

[A]utonomy is multidimensional and takes many different forms according to the person, the setting, and multiple contextual and micro-contextual factors. Learners display autonomy in very different ways, which allows for a variety of views of the kinds of autonomy that should be aimed at in particular contexts…The proliferation of studies on autonomy inside and outside the language learning classroom, therefore, reflects the proliferation of settings and contexts for language learning and leads to multiple variations on what is essentially the same idea of autonomy as the capacity to

take charge of one's learning. This core definition of autonomy has proved remarkably resilient as a focal point for theory and practice. (p. 16) (my emphasis)

For those of us involved in this field, it is our right as well as our responsibility (either as a teacher or a researcher or both) to keep searching for a better definition of learner autonomy. Insofar as it is an acceptable definition of learner autonomy (i.e. showing some relation to *taking charge of one's learning*), it is also our responsibility and right to find better ways of promoting autonomy in our learners.

In this regard, it is certainly true to say that there exists a wide variety of pedagogical approaches of promoting learner autonomy potentially suitable in each educational context. Learner autonomy must be a reality not merely a name or slogan. It is for this reason that learner autonomy research should be responsible for providing more concrete answers to the question of how we can help 'our learners' to become more autonomous, including in the EFL school context where not much freedom is allowed.

It is therefore not surprising and entirely natural to consider that incorporating the notion of self-regulation into the framework of learner autonomy (with a focus on how it contributes to learners' processes in becoming more autonomous) may shed a brighter light on the developmental aspects of learner autonomy. This would certainly be helpful for those teachers who are endeavoring to promote autonomy in their learners in EFL school contexts which are full of constraints and limitations and thus do not allow for much freedom (due to e.g. the fixed curricular goals, large class sizes, textbook- and exam-oriented teaching, and teacher-fronted instruction). Although I believe that it is the individual teacher who knows how best to promote autonomy in his/her learners, even in the school context, and that it is ultimately one's own responsibility to become able to do so through a trial and error process, I argue that there is great potential for learner autonomy research, through the integration of the notion of self-regulation, to provide teachers with more concrete suggestions.

However, the majority of the existing learner autonomy literature following this line of inquiry has been conducted within the framework of language learning strategies (e.g. Wenden, 1991; 1998) and does not necessarily provide a 'sufficient' account of either the relationship between learner autonomy and self-regulation nor the benefits of the possible inclusion of self-regulation within the framework of learner autonomy research (at least, to

the extent that practitioners can make sense of it). As a result, our picture of the relationship between learner autonomy and self-regulation still remains incomplete and partial. This is mostly the case in secondary school EFL contexts, but is also an issue in tertiary EFL contexts where learners bring with them ideas and approaches accumulated from their previous language learning experiences at secondary school.

Accordingly, the present paper will attempt to offer insights into how these two concepts can be integrated, both from a theoretical/conceptual perspective and an educational/pedagogical perspective. I begin by describing the background of self-regulation and learner autonomy; based on this account I then attempt to show how they interlink with each other. Next, I discuss the role of self-regulation and teacher scaffolding in the EFL classroom, which is necessary for the learner's shift from being teacher-dependent to more autonomous. With these two cornerstones in place, I present a view of self-regulation that will hopefully create a foundation for discussing how self-regulation can be situated within the framework of learner autonomy.

The whole argument of this present paper is based on the premise that self-regulation can contribute to the development of agency toward the achievement of learner autonomy. Teachers' awareness of theory and practice regarding self-regulated learning is an important step towards the realization of teacher autonomy (see Andrews (2007) for a discussion of teacher language awareness). This can provide teachers with concrete ways of scaffolding students' learning and therefore help them too become more autonomous.

The Notion of Self-Regulation

Viewed from a historical angle, learner autonomy research and self-regulation research have different origins and roots. Broadly speaking, learner autonomy research has been developed primarily in the field of applied linguistics within a qualitative/interpretative paradigm. The concept of autonomy itself was originally imported from the fields of politics and moral philosophy, and has been discussed in the language learning academic sphere over the last 20 years mostly in Europe and in more recent years in Asia and South America (see Benson, 2011; Smith, 2008). For its part, self-regulation research, whose genesis lies in cognitive psychology, developed out of a quantitative/positivistic research paradigm. It started in North America and then expanded to Europe. It may not be too much to say that

both of these constructs have increasingly gained more recognition among scholars in different parts of the world.

Zimmerman (2000, p. 14) defines self-regulation as "self-generated thoughts, feelings, and actions that are planned and cyclically adapted to the attainment of personal goals." Recent discussions and empirical studies have tended to support the idea that the self-regulatory process is both cognitive and affective (Boekaerts, Pintrich, & Zeidner, 2000; Schunk & Zimmerman, 2008). Zimmerman and Schunk (2011) explain this nicely:

> [Self-regulated] learning and performance refers to the processes whereby learners personally activate and sustain cognitions, affects, and behaviors that are systematically oriented toward the attainment of personal goals. By setting personal goals, learners create self-oriented feedback loops through which they can monitor their effectiveness and adapt their functioning. Because self-regulated persons must be proactive in order to set goals and engage in a self-regulatory cycle, supportive motivational beliefs are also essential. (p. 1)

Self-regulation research, with a specific focus on its developmental processes, is beneficial not only to self-regulation researchers but also to educational practitioners in that it helps explain achievement differences among our students and teaches us how to improve their achievement (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2008, p. vii). Understanding the mechanism of self-regulated language learning helps both researchers and teachers to delve deeper into what is exactly impeding and promoting learners' self-regulation and to speculate about ways of scaffolding their learning.

Given this importance, researchers in the fields of language learning motivation and language learning strategies have gradually started to engage with the study of self-regulation. In the last decade or so, we have indeed witnessed vibrant discussions of self-regulation, but mostly either as an alternative to or an extension of 'language learning strategy' research whose primary focus is more on the cognition and behavior of successful language learners (Griffiths, 2008; Rose, 2012; Tseng, Dörnyei & Schmitt, 2006; also see the 2012 Special Issue on Strategies and Self-Regulation in Self-Access Learning of this journal) or 'motivation' research whose primary focus has often been more on affective issues relating

to unsuccessful language learners (Nakata, 2006; Ushioda, 2008). In more recent years, however, we see more studies that attempt to comprehensively explore all aspects of language learning—cognitive, behavioral, and affective—also without limiting themselves to either successful or unsuccessful learners alone (Bown & White, 2010; Nakata, 2010; Rose & Harbon, 2011; Tsuda & Nakata, 2013). At least as far as the pedagogical implications of these studies are concerned, it may be fair to say that while it typically remains 'implicit', autonomy seems to be the ultimate goal of developing learners' self-regulated learning skills.

Admittedly, most classroom practitioners are waiting for research that reveals the self-regulatory processes of both successful and unsuccessful learners (and, more precisely, what is exactly impeding and promoting their learning) that would thereby help them to think about their own approaches for cultivating autonomy in their learners (i.e. supporting the shift from being teacher-dependent to more autonomous). This is an issue we must address urgently and it is one that cannot be answered exclusively by the existing self-regulation research literature.

Self-Regulation and Learner Autonomy: How Are They Related?

With the rise of self-regulation research not only in educational psychology (Boekaerts, 1999; Boekaerts & Cacallar, 2006; Schunk & Zimmerman, 2008) but also in applied linguistics (Bown & White, 2010; Tseng, Dörnyei, & Schmitt, 2006), there are growing calls for a clarification of the relation between self-regulation and learner autonomy among researchers in the fields of applied linguistics and TEFL (e.g. Lewis & Vialleton, 2011; Nakata, 2010, among others). While we are aware that there is a relation between them, it is as yet not entirely clear how they are related. In fact, theoretical discussion regarding the connection (e.g. Lewis & Vialleton, 2011) is still rather meager relative to that of the relation between language learning strategy use and self-regulation. Anecdotal evidence also seems to suggest that the same holds true for practitioners (Nakata, forthcoming). For some, autonomy means becoming more self-regulated in learning a foreign language, gaining better control of one's own learning, and becoming a more autonomous language learner. For others, it means a learner's psychological and physical freedom from external forces. Still, for others, it is a matter of intrinsic motivation. Admittedly, clarifying this relationship is an extremely difficult task to complete.

Here I would like to offer my own theorization of this relationship. Figure 1 illustrates the possible integration of self-regulation within the framework of learner autonomy, postulating that learner autonomy is a more over-arching construct that self-regulated learning can be included within. It is perhaps true to say that self-regulation on its own is not enough to account for the development of autonomy in learners. Instead, it may be plausible to consider that its inclusion within the autonomy framework should be accompanied by such other factors as agency and teacher autonomy.

The development of learner autonomy implies lifelong language learning; the endeavor to promote autonomy in learners means helping them to continue their learning throughout their lives. In this sense, the development of learner autonomy inevitably involves the evolution of a learner's *agency*; one of the most fundamental characteristics of general human behavior defined as "a person's ability to control their actions and, through them, events in the extended world" Haggard & Taskiris, 2009, p. 242) or an individual's will and capacity to act (Gao, 2010; see Gao & Zhang, 2011; Toohey & Norton, 2003 for the relationship between agency and learner autonomy). In order to become an autonomous language learner, one must come to be able to not only self-regulate his or her learning but also develop a sense of agency in learning a foreign language. Those learners who are more self-regulated in learning a foreign language 'skillfully' are able to utilize that skill to become more responsible and autonomous learners, and thus are likely to develop a better sense of agency as a lifelong language learner.

Furthermore, the development of learner autonomy is to a greater or a lesser extent dependent on the degree of teacher autonomy (Little, 1995; Smith, 2000). In other words, teacher autonomy seems to be a precondition for the promotion of learner autonomy in that those who wish to promote autonomy in learners must themselves be autonomous not only in their professional skills but also in employing practices for promoting autonomy (Nakata, 2011). More precisely, within the framework illustrated in Figure 1, teacher autonomy implies the extent to which teachers endeavor to help promote their learners' self-regulated learning while helping develop their sense of agency, and as a result these two aspects together help promote learner autonomy.

Importantly, all of these factors must be underpinned by a suitable educational philosophy (i.e. the characteristics we endeavor to cultivate in our learners, along with an

ideal model of autonomous language learners). Otherwise, it would be difficult to put them together within the framework of learner autonomy. Taken together, this model attempts to provide a clearer picture of how the concept of self-regulation can be integrated within the framework of learner autonomy.
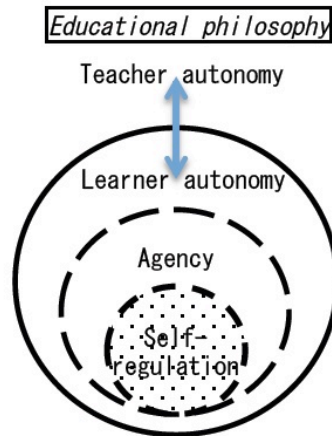
Figure 1. Learner autonomy: drawing together the threads of self-regulation, learner agency, and teacher autonomy underpinned by educational philosophy (Revised from Nakata (forthcoming)).

The Role of Scaffolding for the Evolution of Agency

Learner autonomy has an important role to play for successful lifelong language learning, particularly in the EFL context where learners tend to have infrequent contact with native speakers of English and thus limited opportunities to use English. Successful language learning is unlikely to occur unless the learner as an active agent endeavors to take charge of his/her own foreign language learning throughout his/her life. Seen from the teacher's perspective, simply stated, whichever the research paradigm (language learning strategies, motivation, or self-regulation) or educational context (ESL, EFL, exam-oriented learning, whole class instruction, or communicative language teaching, etc.), the agenda common to those of us interested in the field of self-regulated learning seems to be to help learners move *from being teacher-dependent to more autonomous*, in other words, the development of learner agency (Gao, 2010; also see Ushioda (2001) for a discussion of L2 learner

development of motivational thinking over time).

Figure 2 depicts the development of learner agency toward the achievement of learner autonomy, showing how learner characteristics change when provided with the right kind of scaffolding. It postulates that, given appropriate support in the quality and quantity of learning, learners can be encouraged to become more self-regulated in learning a foreign language and gradually start to take more responsibility for their learning. In other words, agency is considered here as a prerequisite for the development of learner autonomy.
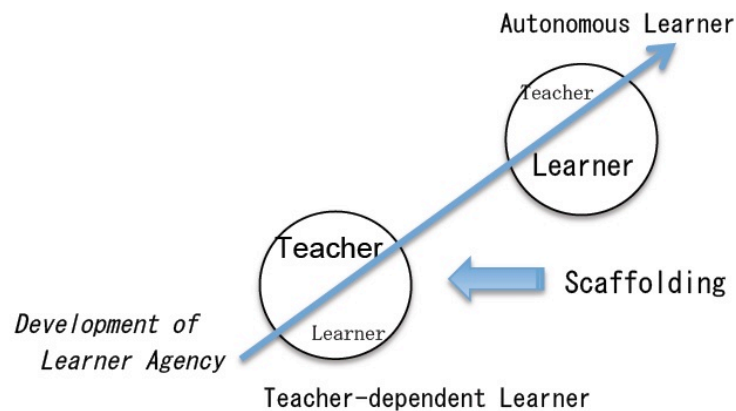
Figure 2. Development of learner agency toward learner autonomy (Revised from Nakata (forthcoming)).

Little (1995, p. 178) argues that total independence from the teacher, from other learners, and from formally-approved curricula is not autonomy but, rather, autism, suggesting the importance of interdependence for the development of learner autonomy. Perhaps, many, if not all of us, agree that the process of becoming an autonomous language learner needs both independence and interdependence, and thus support from teachers or colleagues is crucial to this end. Herein lies a role for scaffolding to play (Perry, Hutchinson, & Tauberger, 2007). Teachers need to be able to help their learners learn how they can better self-regulate their own learning, while helping to remove the problems and obstacles impeding their self-regulation. With the right kind of teacher scaffolding, each individual learner can come to better self-regulate his or her own learning, and thus begin to develop their agency with the goal of achieving learner autonomy.

However, the answer to the question "what kind of or degree of support is appropriate

for improving learners' self-regulation in a given situation so that it will contribute to the development of promoting learner autonomy" still remains. Some teachers tend to provide learners with excessive support, resulting in the learners not receiving opportunities to exercise their skills or complete learning tasks on their own. In other cases we see teachers not providing any support and, furthermore, failing to encourage support from classmates when appropriate, leaving students in the dark. Still others move between the extremes of being sometimes over-supportive to at other times under-supportive. Teachers wishing to promote autonomy in learners through attempting to improve their learners' self-regulation must be able to monitor their learners' readiness for autonomous language learning, and thereby be able to provide each individual learner with the right kind of scaffolding at each different stage of the learning process (Nakata, 2010).

In considering the right kind of support for promoting learners' self-regulation toward the achievement of learner autonomy, Brophy's (2004) idea of the cognitive and motivational zone of proximal development (ZPD) dimensions (above, within, and below ZPD: whether learners can do it on their own easily, manage to do it on their own, or cannot do it on their own) is particularly useful.

In line with this idea, I developed the model shown in Figure 3 in an attempt to delineate the dimensions of motivational and cognitive scaffolding further, and provide a more detailed account of expected outcomes for different combinations of motivational and cognitive readiness. In this model, *motivational scaffolding* (i.e. experiences of small success and personally relevant tasks) consists of three readiness levels: 'no interest', 'fun, enjoyable' (affective/fun aspects) and 'fun, enjoyable, meaningful, and worthwhile' (affective/fun aspects as well as cognitive/learning aspects) (see Brophy, 2004; Nakata, 2009, 2010 for this discussion). *Cognitive scaffolding* (i.e. helping develop better language learning strategies) consists of two readiness levels: 'not yet able to learn' and 'able to learn.' The expected outcomes displayed in the shaded cells in Figure 3 can be considered as the result of the combination of these two types of scaffolding according to each learner's degree of readiness (i.e. extremely limited outcome, limited outcome, high outcome for a limited amount of time, potential high long lasting outcome, high long lasting outcome). For example, when learners have motivational readiness for both affective/fun and cognitive/learning aspects, even with low cognitive readiness, their learning can be potentially long-lasting. However, the outcome

of learners with a higher level of cognitive readiness ('able to learn') is likely to be limited in the case of low motivational readiness.

All in all, the model suggests that the right kind of scaffolding must be provided for each individual learner, carefully considering each learner's readiness not only at the motivational level but also at the cognitive level.

Motivational scaffolding (small success, personal relevance) →

		No Interest	Fun, Enjoyable	Fun, Enjoyable Meaningful, Worthwhile
Cognitive Scaffolding (language learning strategies) ↓	Not yet able to learn	Low motivational readiness	A level of motivational readiness	High motivational readiness
		Low cognitive readiness	Low cognitive readiness	Low cognitive readiness
		Extremely limited outcome	Limited outcome	Potential high long–lasting outcome
	Able to learn	Low motivational readiness	A level of motivational readiness	High motivational readiness
		A level of cognitive readiness	A level of cognitive readiness	High cognitive readiness
		Limited outcome	High outcome for a limited amount of time	High long–lasting outcome

Figure 3. A model of motivational and cognitive scaffolding.

The development of learner autonomy encompassing self-regulated language learning is dependent on teacher autonomy in that learners can become self-regulated in language learning, and thus autonomous language learners, to the extent that teachers can monitor learners' readiness (motivational/cognitive), the obstacles to their self-regulated learning in light of cyclical phases of self-regulation (Zimmermann, 2011), and the gap in support between what learners need and what teachers provide. It is through the monitoring of these areas that teachers can come to be able to successfully narrow that gap and to offer their learners the right kind of scaffolding. This kind of scaffolding helps promote learners' cycles of self-regulation, and, as a result, can help learners themselves to develop a sense of agency toward the achievement of their own autonomy as learners.

Conclusion

As I argued earlier, I believe the inclusion of the notion of self-regulation into the framework of learner autonomy may help not only clarify perspectives of researchers working within different research paradigms, but also enhance our understanding of how teachers can support their learners' development of autonomy, and contribute to the appropriate conditions necessary for this development. In particular, there are important roles for Zimmerman's cyclical phases of self-regulation (Zimmerman, 2011) and the associated self-regulatory sub-processes to play for both naïve and skillful self-regulated learners (Zimmerman, 1998). For those practitioners who are wishing to promote autonomy in their learners (particularly in the EFL school context), understanding cycles of self-regulation (including what is promoting and impeding learning) is crucial. With the help of the theory of self-regulation, teachers can have a clearer image of what kind of autonomy their students should achieve and of how they can better help learners self-regulate their foreign language learning with the aim of developing learner autonomy. If this issue of the role of self-regulated learning is left unattended, it may be difficult for those working in teacher-training to provide teachers striving to help their learners to become more autonomous with the kind of concrete support that is required to meet this aim.

In the edited volume "*Jibunno ashi de aruku chikara wo sodateru: Gakushusha autonomy eno chousen*" [Cultivating language learners who can move forward on their own: Challenge toward learner autonomy] (Nakata, forthcoming), I asked 12 secondary school teachers to outline their practices for promoting learner autonomy, including their own definitions of learner autonomy and the learner characteristics they wish to cultivate. Echoing Benson's remark introduced at the outset of this paper, the contributors to this volume provided varied definitions of learner autonomy and practice dealing with different aspects of learner autonomy such as agency, self-regulation, teacher autonomy, social interaction, and strategy training. Yet, to varying extents, all of their definitions seem to contain at the core the idea of *taking charge of one's learning.* Some are closer to "formal" definitions of learner autonomy (i.e. the one made by Holec), while others are more related to self-regulation (i.e. the one made by Zimmerman); however their voices seem to strongly suggest that it was their experience through the book project that led them to speculate about the meaning of

autonomy and the nature of their practice, and thereby take the step toward teacher autonomy. It was for this very reason that I asked these practitioners to provide their own definitions of learner autonomy and characteristics of autonomous language learners. The wide variety of definitions of learner autonomy they provided offer compelling evidence in support of the argument for integrating the notion of self-regulation into the framework of learner autonomy.

Needless to say, the theoretical framework provided in this paper must be further vindicated by empirical evidence. However, it is my hope that the present paper will help lay the foundation for the inclusion of the notion of self-regulation into the framework of learner autonomy.

Acknowledgment

Notes on the contributor

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Examining the Relationships between Self-Efficacy, Effort Regulation Strategy Use, and English Vocabulary Skills

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Abstract

This study explores the relationships among self-efficacy beliefs, effort regulation strategies, and English vocabulary development at a university in Japan. The theoretical framework draws on Pintrich and Zusho's (2002) model of self-regulation, motivation, and academic success and Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory.

Educational psychology literature indicates that self-efficacy beliefs predict self-regulation strategy use, and that self-efficacy beliefs and self-regulated learning are two of the most important predictors of a learner's academic success (Bandura, 1986; Pintrich, 2004). Although a large number of studies have been conducted in general education, there has been limited research on this topic in the Japanese university English education context.

In order to examine the relationships between learners' self-efficacy beliefs, effort regulation strategy use, and English vocabulary skills, the present research focused on English majors at a Japanese university. Data were collected using a questionnaire including items that measured self-efficacy and effort regulation strategies, and Nation's Vocabulary Size Test (2001). The data were analyzed employing structural equation modeling in order to highlight clear relationships among these variables.

The results indicated that self-efficacy predicted effort regulation strategies use, which in turned influenced L2 vocabulary skills.

Keywords: effort regulation strategies, self-efficacy, L2 vocabulary skills

Significance of Developing Self-Regulated Learners

Developing self-regulated learners who can manage their learning effectively—with clear goals, high motivation, and self-efficacy—is important for success in foreign language learning. This is especially the case for diverse English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts (Oxford & Lee, 2008). It is well documented in educational psychology that self-regulation has profound effects on academic achievement and that self-efficacy influences self-regulation strategy use, which in turn predicts academic achievement (Pajares & Schunk, 2001). However, although the importance of self-regulation has been documented in L2 literature in the last decade (e.g., Tseng, Dörnyei, & Schmitt, 2006), findings on factors that facilitate self-regulated language learning and the relationships among variables that predict L2 achievement are still in their infancy, and the findings are rather limited. Thus, it is empirically and pedagogically valuable to explore such relationships in L2 skill areas.

Literature

Self-efficacy and self-regulation as predictors of academic achievement

Research from within educational psychology indicates that self-efficacy is an important predictor of academic learning (Pintrich, Smith, Garcia, & McKeachie, 1991, Pintrich & Zusho, 2002; Zimmerman & Martinez Pons, 1990). Self-efficacy refers to learners' judgments of their abilities to complete a specific task successfully (Bandura, 1986; Paulsen & Gentry, 1995; Schunk, 1996). Self-efficacy was derived from Bandura's social cognitive theory (1986), which states that individuals develop perceptions of their own capabilities in performing a task. These perceptions influence the pursuit of goals, degree of motivation and task persistence along with selection and use of strategies. Self-efficacy has been reported to have a profound impact on academic achievement, and self-efficacious learners tend to anticipate successful results, engage in difficult tasks, and maintain their commitment to learning, which typically results in positive academic outcomes (e.g., Paulsen & Gentry, 1995; Pintrich et al., 1991; Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1990). Schunk (1985) and Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons (1990) have demonstrated that students with high efficacy are likely to use more cognitive and metacognitive strategies and stay engaged in those tasks more thoughtfully and longer than those with low efficacy, thereby demonstrating successful learning. Thus, self-efficacy appears to fuel motivation (i.e., a drive to instigate their learning) and volition (i.e., willpower to help learners to maintain their learning when they are faced with distracting factors), enabling learners to persist when faced with difficulties, which in turn leads to higher academic achievement.

Previous studies show that self-regulation is also an important predictor of academic learning outcomes. The definition of self-regulation differs from researcher to researcher depending on their theoretical groundings, but Pintrich and Zusho (2002) postulate that self-regulation involves the learner proactively and reactively managing his or her learning processes cognitively, motivationally, and behaviorally. In the model they put forward, Pintrich and Zusho (2002) include volition as one of the essential elements in executing self-regulated learning.

Empirical findings support these theoretical perspectives. Pintrich and De Groot's (1990) study using a preliminary version of the Motivated Strategic Learning Questionnaire (Pintrich, Smith, Garcia, & McKeachie, 1993) investigated the relationship of motivational variables, including self-efficacy and self-regulation, and academic achievement of middle school students in the US. Results indicated that self-efficacy and

self-regulation were significant predictors of learning outcomes, that self-efficacy was correlated with self-regulation, and that self-efficacy and self-regulation were significant predictors of academic achievement. Thus, research began to investigate the relationship between self-efficacy and self-regulation, with self-regulation seen as an intervening variable operating between self-efficacy and academic learning results. Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons (1990) reported that learners who demonstrated the use of effective self-regulation strategies and who had a high degree of self-efficacy were likely to succeed academically, indicating that self-efficacy, which helps maintain volition, appeared to promote the use of self-regulation strategies.

Social cognitive views of self-regulation (Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1990; Pintrich & Zusho, 2002) posit that volition is an important element of self-regulation when learners are engaged in learning activities, as is indicated in Zimmerman's (2000) three-stage model of self-regulation (Figure 1). This model posits that self-regulated learners pass through three cyclical phases involved in the self-regulation process: a forethought phase, a volitional or performance control phase, and a self-reflection phase. According to this model, when faced with an academic task, learners set an appropriate learning goal and plan procedures and strategies. Then, when engaging in the task, their learning behavior is supported by volitional or performance control. Learners regulate or maintain their concentration, attention, and motivation so that they can efficiently learn and attain the initially determined goal. Finally, upon completion, the learners reflect on their learning outcomes, using this reflection to then help maintain motivation and sustain or improve performance in future academic tasks.

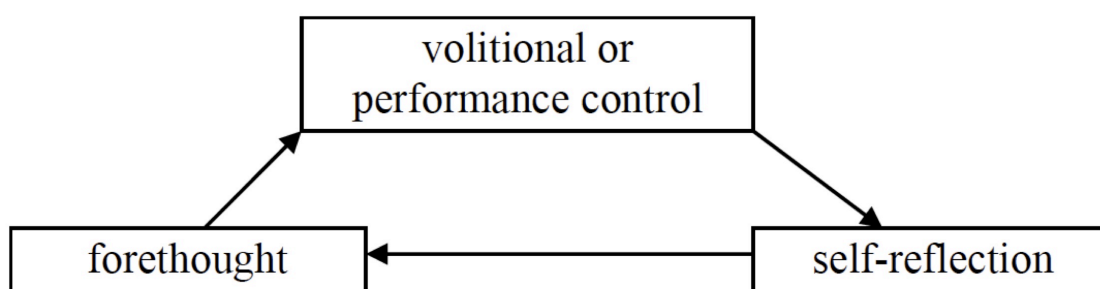Figure 1. Zimmerman's (2000) Model of Self-Regulatory Process

The importance of volition is, unsurprisingly, even more strongly emphasized in self-regulation models postulated by volitional theorists (Gollwitizer, 1996; Corno, 2001). With these models, it is argued that in order for learners to successfully accomplish their learning goals, volition is required in addition to self-efficacy and metacognitive self-

regulation. Volition is represented in effort regulation, a subset of self-regulation concerned with maintaining volition for learning until the learning goal is achieved, especially when executing self-regulation while faced with distractions such as fatigue, boredom, and tedious or uninteresting tasks.

The relationships between self-efficacy, self-regulation, and L2 learning outcome

My contention is that the relationships observed in educational psychology between self-efficacy, self-regulation, and academic achievement can be confirmed in EFL learning, and that self-efficacy and effort regulation strategies are important predictors of English learning outcomes. More specifically, I hypothesize that self-efficacy predicts L2 learning, directly and through effort regulation strategy use. In the L2 field, however, investigations of such relationships are rather limited. Wang's (2007) study conducted in an ESL context showed that self-efficacy beliefs were related to motivation for learning and self-regulated strategy use. Wong's (2005) study with ESL learners reported similar results: self-efficacy beliefs were correlated with self-regulation strategy use, indicating highly efficacious language learners are more proactive learners, employing self-regulation strategies that suit the learning context.

It is important to note that in the L2 field, the concept of self-regulation has recently been used alongside similar concepts such as autonomy and metacognition; discussions of the latter two concepts have outlined the importance for learners of setting goals, selecting strategies, monitoring learning processes, evaluating and reflecting on learning outcome, and making causal attributions (Dörnyei, 2005). While the discussions may also involve motivation, they do not explicitly include volition. Thus, it is hypothesized (Dörnyei, 2005; Pintrich & Zusho, 2002) that even if learners demonstrate good knowledge of metacognition and a high degree of autonomy, it is not evident that they can continue to manage learning when they are faced with distractions and difficulties; motivation alone may not be adequate for successful L2 self-regulated learning. Rather, as volitional theorists postulate (Corno, 2001; Gollwitzer, 1996), motivation may only help learners to initiate their learning and may not be adequate for maintaining self-regulated learning.

In the case of L2 vocabulary learning. As the discussion above suggests, self-regulation that emphasizes volition seems to be important for L2 learning as well. This especially holds true for L2 vocabulary learning, which requires multiple exposure and

retrievals of target words and multiunit words in order to acquire an adequate lexis to communicate effectively (Nation & Newton, 2009). Vocabulary acquisition researchers (Laufer, Meara, & Nation, 2005) suggest that knowing 5,000 word families, which comprises approximately 70% of authentic non-fiction texts, is necessary for reasonable reading comprehension. For effectively delivering messages, a good knowledge of at least 8,000 word families is required (Nation, 2001). A large amount of time, practice, and energy is necessary for learners to be able to automatize their use of vocabulary. The L2 vocabulary acquisition literature indicates that a number of self-regulation strategies that require not only metacognition but also volition are necessary for explicit language-focused learning activities (Beglar & Hunt, 2005; Onoda, 2013). Such activities include learning and reviewing words, using word cards and learning collocations, word families, synonyms, and word parts either intensively or on a regular basis (Laufer et al., 2005). It is true that decontextualized vocabulary learning plays an important role, but this activity alone does not enable learners to automatize their knowledge and effectively use words in real life. For this purpose, learners need to also engage in meaning-focused input and output activities and fluency development activities (Beglar & Hunt, 2005; Nation & Newton, 2009). These include, among others, extensive reading, timed writing, and active use of vocabulary in different contexts. Thus, as discussed earlier, vocabulary learning, with its long and various processes, requires not only metacognitive self-regulation where learners set a learning goal, select self-regulation strategies, monitor their learning, evaluate their learning outcomes, and reflect on results; learners also need to maintain their learning through volition or employing effort regulation strategies because learners are likely to run into cognitive, mental, and motivational obstacles

Considering the difficulties L2 learners face, a few researchers have argued for the importance of volition in L2 vocabulary learning and developed a self-regulation model of vocabulary learning. Tseng, Dörnyei, and Schmitt (2006) developed the Self-Regulatory Capacity in Vocabulary Learning scale (SRCvoc) and attempted to measure the underlying self-regulatory capacity of learners. The instrument focused on five aspects of self-regulation: commitment control, metacognitive control, satiation control, emotion control, and environmental control. The whole measurement tool demonstrated a high reliability, indicating that self-regulation emphasizing volition is one of the most important predictors of L2 vocabulary learning. The construct validity and reliability were later tested and confirmed by Mizumoto and Takeuchi's replicated study (2012). These studies are insightful and lend support to the importance of effort regulation strategies (i.e., strategies

to maintain learning when faced with distractions) as well as metacognitive self-regulation strategies (i.e., strategies to employ metacognition in learning) in vocabulary learning and the need for investigation of the relationships among self-efficacy, effort regulation strategy use, and L2 vocabulary skills.

Research Question

Motivated by the literature discussed above, the present study attempted to answer the following research question: What are the relationships between self-efficacy, effort regulation strategy use, and L2 vocabulary skills? To address this question, the following hypotheses were tested:

H1: Self-efficacy directly influences L2 vocabulary skills.

H2: Self-efficacy influences effort regulation strategy use.

H3: Effort regulation strategy use influences L2 vocabulary skills.

Figure 2 illustrates the proposed relationships between the constructs under study.

H_1

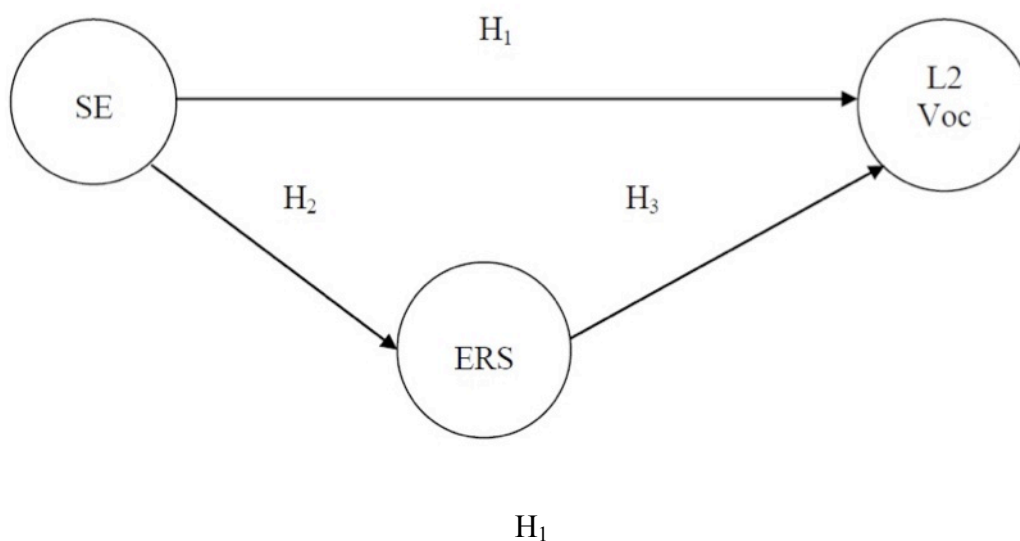Figure 2. Hypothesized Model Explaining the Relationships between Self-efficacy, Effort Regulation Strategies, and L2 Vocabulary Skills

Note: SE = self-efficacy; ERS = effort regulation strategy use; L2 Voc = L2 vocabulary skills.

Method

The participants in this study were 235 second-year English majors (79 males and 156 females) enrolled in 11 classes of a Media English course at a private Japanese

university in 2012. Their general English proficiency was measured using the TOEFL, with a range of scores from 385 to 555, and a mean and SD of 485 and 38.55 respectively.

The questionnaire for self-regulation strategy use and self-efficacy

The questionnaire to measure the use of effort regulation strategies and self-efficacy beliefs was based on the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) (Pintrich, Smith, Garcia, & McKeachie, 1993). The development of the questionnaire used in this study is outlined in Onoda (2013). The original MSLQ is an 81-item self-report instrument with a seven-point scale designed to measure two constructs: motivation and learning strategies. Learning strategy items include effort regulation strategies as the representation of volition. Motivation constructs include self-efficacy for learning and performance items. The MSLQ has been translated and employed in many countries around the world and has been shown to have high reliability in measuring self-regulation strategy use and motivation of students from elementary school to university across a range of school or academic subjects (Schunk, 2005).

The MSLQ items that measure effort regulation strategy use and self-efficacy beliefs were revised into those that best suit L2 vocabulary learning by the researcher and a colleague. These revised items were then checked and modified based on feedback from a group of five 4th-year students with TOEFL scores above 550 who had been identified as good language learners by their teachers. These modified items were used with a group of 60 students who were not part of the research sample, and the results were further analyzed using Rasch analyses in order to check the rating scale functioning, construct unidimensionality, and the point-measure correlations of the items. Through these steps, four items that measure effort regulation strategies and four items that measure self-efficacy beliefs with high Rasch person reliability and separation estimates (.82 and .79, respectively) and high Rasch item reliability and separation estimates (.95 and .98, respectively) were created for use in this study (see Appendices A and B).

The Vocabulary Size Test (Nation, 2001)

For measuring vocabulary skills, a version of the Vocabulary Size Test developed by Nation (2001) and used in L2 literature was used. A preliminary study (Onoda, 2013) indicated that this version of the test measured the passive vocabulary knowledge of English majors with a high reliability. This vocabulary test has 10 items from each 1000-word level, 140 items in total, in a multiple-choice format. The words

from the 1,000 word level to the 8,000 word level were selected and used for the present study because acquiring a vocabulary of 8,000 words is a goal at the researcher's university, and has been reported to be a goal of English majors at universities in Japan (Beglar, 2000).

The effort regulation strategy and self-efficacy questionnaire and the Vocabulary Size Test were administered to 235 students in January 2014. The Vocabulary Size test data were all normally distributed, with a mean of 45.31 and standard deviation of 8.75, the skewness (.31) and kurtosis (.37) was acceptable, and no outliers were identified. The Vocabulary Size Test demonstrated a high reliability coefficient of α= .89.

Given that no problem was identified with the vocabulary test data and the questionnaire data, structural equation modeling was employed in this study in order to test the causal relationships of the target variables. This statistical method allows researchers to determine which particular variables have the strongest predictive power and to determine how well the predictors explain the criterion variable (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004). Results are given in greater detail below.

Results

The research question concerned the relationships between self-efficacy, effort regulation strategies, and L2 vocabulary skills. Using data from the effort regulation strategy use and self-efficacy questionnaire and the Vocabulary Size Test scores, structural equation modeling was performed using AMOS 7.0J (Arbuckle, 2006). The correlation matrix for the latent variables is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Correlation Matrix for All Variables

Measure	1	2	3
1. SE			
2. ERS	.677.**		
3. L2Voc	.385*	.654**	

Note. SE = self-efficacy; ERS = effort regulation strategy use; L2 Voc = L2 vocabulary skills **p < .001 (2-tailed), * p < .005 (2-tailed)

The hypothesized relationships represented in Figure 2 are generally supported by the correlation coefficients displayed in Table 1. Self-efficacy was highly correlated with

effort regulation strategy use ($r = .677$, $p < .001$) and moderately correlated with L2 vocabulary skills ($r = .385$, $p < .005$). In addition, effort regulation strategy use was highly correlated with L2 vocabulary skills ($r = 654$, $p < .001$).

Figure 3. Model Explaining the Relationships between Self-efficacy, Effort Regulation Strategy Use, and L2 Vocabulary Skills

Note. SE = self-efficacy; ERS = effort regulation strategy use; L2 Voc = L2 vocabulary skills.

In the hypothesized model, self-efficacy directly affects L2 vocabulary skills (H_1). In addition, self-efficacy is hypothesized to have a direct influence on effort regulation strategy use (H_2), which in turn predicts L2 vocabulary skills (H_3). The results indicated that self-efficacy did not directly influence L2 vocabulary skills ($\beta = .25$, $p < .05$). Instead, self-efficacy significantly predicted effort regulation strategy use ($\beta = .67$, $p < .001$), which in turn predicted L2 vocabulary skills ($\beta = .66$, $p < .001$). Additionally, as the fit indices indicate, the hypothesized model met criteria for acceptable model fit: χ^2 (Chi-square) 1841/235) = 7.82, $p = .00$, CFI = .85, RMSEA = .057, SRMR = .055. Hu and Bentler (1999) suggested that ideally at least two of the cutoff values closer to .95 for CFI, .08 for SRMR, .06 for RMSEA are needed before we can conclude that there is a good fit between the hypothesized model and the observed data. However, they also indicated that a combination of cutoff values approaching .05 for RMSEA and .06 for SRMR are considered indicative of an acceptable fit. Thus, the model was judged acceptable. The standardized path coefficients indicated that all the paths, except Hypothesis 1, were statistically significant.

Discussion

The interrelationships between self-efficacy, effort regulation strategy use, and L2 vocabulary skills were investigated using structural equation modeling. The results indicated that self-efficacy significantly influenced effort regulation strategy use, which in turn influenced L2 vocabulary skill development. However, the path from self-efficacy to L2 vocabulary skills was not confirmed. Self-efficacy did not directly predict L2 vocabulary skills, but it influenced L2 vocabulary indirectly through the mediation of effort regulation strategy use. This result suggests that, in addition to self-efficacy developed through previous learning experiences, learners need to know, and be able to employ, effort regulation strategies in order to control their learning behavior for successful learning.

This study demonstrated that effort regulation strategy use (as the representation of volition) is important for developing L2 vocabulary skills. It also suggests that it is crucial for educators to understand the importance of learners developing self-efficacy because this can positively affect effort regulation strategy use. In order to promote self-efficacy, as Bandura (1986) postulates, teachers can help learners experience personal mastery experiences or repeated successful experiences, allow them to observe peers overcoming challenging or ego-threatening tasks and achieving success, arrange for them to receive positive feedback from significant others such as teachers, and reduce their anxiety while learning. While engaged in these experiences, learners can also learn to improve their effort regulation strategies as manifested by volition. In addition, self-regulation strategies can be taught by direct teaching (Pintrich & Zusho, 2002), and learners can discuss them with peers and the teacher, observe good learners using them, and reflect on their learning (Zimmerman, 2000).

However, one should note a limitation of the present findings. The results reported do not rule out the existence of other potential models (Hagger, Chatzisarantis, & Harris, 2006) because the fit of data to one particular model does not mean that the model is the only correct one; it simply indicates that the model is plausible and has not been disconfirmed. The likelihood does exist that alternative models can be confirmed (Beglar, 2000).
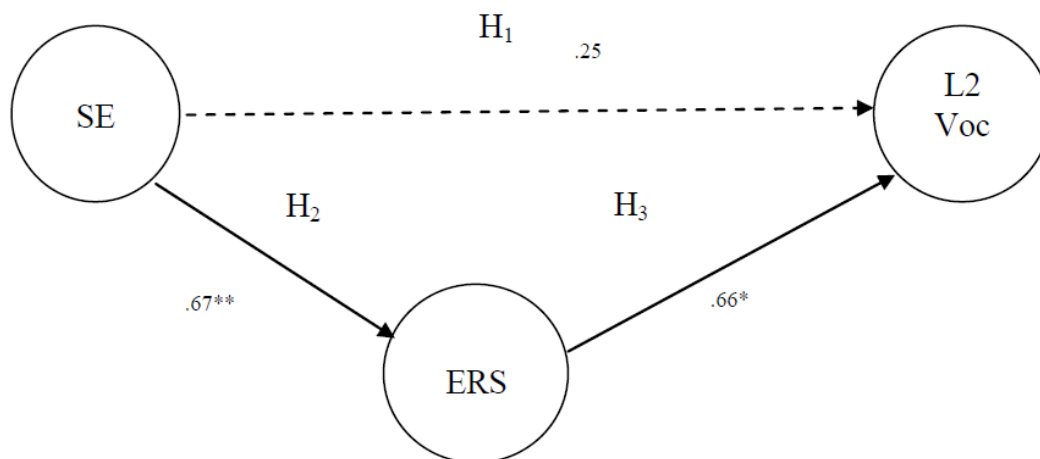
Conclusion

A theoretically and empirically based model explaining the relationships between self-efficacy, effort-regulation strategy use, and L2 vocabulary skills was investigated.

Two of the three hypotheses indicated in the model were supported by the present data, indicating that some of the relationships described in the educational psychology literature might also hold true for English vocabulary learning. Self-efficacy significantly influenced effort regulation strategy use, which in turn significantly predicted L2 vocabulary skills. However, as discussed above, there is a limitation of the present findings; namely, while it is true that the data fit the present model, there are possibilities that alternative models exist. Therefore, it is desirable that replication studies using similar participants (i.e., English majors in EFL contexts) should be conducted in order to lend robust support to the results of the present study.

Notes on the contributor

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Appendices

Appendix A

Self-efficacy Questionnaire Items

SE 1: I am confident that I can learn vocabulary effectively in this class.

SE 2: I am confident that I can do well in the vocabulary tests given in this class.

SE 3: I am confident that I can understand most of the important words that the teacher uses in this course.

SE 4: Considering the difficulty of this class, the teacher and my English ability, I think I can do better than other students.

Appendix B

Effort Regulation Strategy Items

ERS 1: Even if I am tired, I try to follow my vocabulary study plan and study words.

ERS 2: Even if the vocabulary is difficult, I don't give up but try to learn it.

ERS 3: I manage to prioritize vocabulary learning assignments in the face of other temptations in this course.

ERS 4: I work harder on words that are difficult to memorize.

Self-Regulation within Language Learners' Dialogues

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Abstract

This paper aims to show how English learners exert control over the factors intervening in their learning process while they are working in groups. This study was undertaken in a self-access centre (SAC) at a government-funded university in Mexico. It looks at self-regulation in beginner English language learners while completing a learning task. We conducted an analysis of learners' discourses during their interactions in triads in order to present several salient features of self-regulatory activity. The study is framed within Sociocultural Theory (SCT) since SCT outlines interaction and collaboration as fundamental for becoming independent language learners. The findings support the idea that students' development or activation of self-regulatory mechanisms is tightly intertwined with social and affective factors. Collaboration through group work provides the opportunity for regulating the self-and foster learners' autonomy through social activity.

Keywords: Self-regulation, Sociocultural Theory, self-access centers, discourse in group work.

Sociocultural Theory, Language Learning and Mediation

In recent decades, Sociocultural Theory (hereafter SCT) has been of great interest in the discipline of applied linguistics, offering a means of understanding language learning in social interaction (Lantolf & Beckett, 2009). This theory, developed out of the work of Lev Vygotsky (1980), and is founded on the following principles: a) individual cognition is developed in social and cultural contexts, b) human activity is mediated by symbolic tools, such as language, and c) these two—cognition and behavior—are best studied through developmental analysis (Mahn & Reierson, 2012).

Vygotsky, a Russian developmental psychologist, studied the complexity of the functions of mental activity and classified them into two categories: 1) the *elemental functions* such as involuntary, automatic reactions that humans share with other living organisms and 2) the *higher forms of thinking*, which require self control and conscious awareness. Examples of the latter are the use of critical skills in problem solving and the process of making decisions (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Naturally, one of the major objects of study of SCT is the

development from elementary to higher mental functions (Wertsch, 1985); this transition always involves social activity (Vygosky, 1980). Thus, individual cognition is mediated through the use of external artifacts—culturally shared tools or symbols—such as numbers, art, music, language or technology (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Of all the existing artifacts, language is considered the most significant mediational tool contributing to the development of higher order mental functions.

The individual organizes and exerts control over both social and cognitive activity through the use of language, while engaging in tasks to appropriate his/her understanding of the world (Appel & Lantolf, 1994). Language is acknowledged to fluctuate within a dialectic nature—a dynamic bidirectional relation—between the social (intermental) and the individual (intramental) activity (Vygotsky, 1980). That is, personal activity occurs in social, functional meaningful engagement through the mediation of language. Since learning occurs in the intermental plane through social interaction, verbalization is what evidences the intramental activity that the language learner can experience, for example, in a problem-solving task.

To illustrate how language works as a mediating tool to transfer control from the environment to the individual in a language learning setting, it is necessary to create opportunities for collaboration. When the learners are given the conditions to talk in provisional, exploratory ways, through negotiation, explanation, and discussion with their peers, they acquire new practices and knowledge. Thus, it is through collaboration that learners become actively involved in their learning process while providing assistance to their peers by encouraging each other, prompting, discussing, and/or trying to solve and construct the knowledge required for the task (Pifarre & Cobos, 2010). As a result, students are able to develop their language abilities.

The process of learning implies change, which is evident once the individual becomes independent enough to exert control over his or her higher mental functioning. At this stage, the learner then starts self-regulating his or her cognition, emotions and behaviour (Wertsch, 1985).

Self-Regulation

The wealth of research on *self-regulation* has attempted to understand how learners take control of the factors intervening in the learning process. Differing theoretical

perspectives bring different research approaches: cognitive, sociocognitive and sociocultural. All of them share some commonalities, but they also differ in the way they approach accounts of learning.

Self-regulation has been related to the manifestations of control learners exert over their behaviour, motivation and cognition in terms of the learning process (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011). Within cognitive and sociocognitive approaches, this construct has been studied as an individual process. The cognitive approach is based on an individualistic view in which the learners discover their own process of learning. The social cognitive approach adds the role of self-efficacy as an individualised form to manage affectivity in learning. Sociocultural approaches emphasize both the role of the social environment and interaction in the process of developing self-regulation.

In order to understand self-regulation as theorized in SCT, we first need to understand the role of interaction and mediation in the development of higher mental functions. Self-regulation implies the exercise of these functions in interaction since people internalize what others say and as a consequence, can gain control over their own mental processes (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). The internalization of knowledge occurs by means of an individual cognitive process, namely 'inner speech', which is unobservable but made visible and researchable by the use of 'private speech'. Private speech is the dialogue addressed to the self in order to self-regulate, rather than communicate with others (De Guerrero, 2012). Besides private speech, self-regulatory activity becomes observable through behavior; for example, when learners interact with objects (such as books, dictionaries, computers, recorders, among others) within a given environment (for instance, in self-access centres). This is what is called object regulation; individuals are mediated by the use of learning objects and physical arrangement or macrostructure of the space where learning takes place.

Once learners set goals, monitor, and regulate and control their cognition, motivation and behaviour within the contextual opportunities afforded by the environment, self-regulation becomes an active process whereby the learner is able to take control over his or her learning (Dinsmore, Alexander, & Loughlin, 2008). On the grounds that learning occurs through social mediation, it subsequently entails the involvement of other regulation (co-regulation). This means that through the offering of support via action and dialogue, learning is mediated, and this social dialogue also provides others with opportunities to use language and reflect on

meaning and form.

In this article, we present three short segments of conversation to illustrate in a simple form how learners interact and then self-regulate themselves in collaboration with others.

The Study

This is an interpretive and descriptive study carried out in a self access centre at a Mexican university, looking at language learners′ self-regulation while engaged in a conversational task. The main interest of the study was to trace evidence of self-regulatory activity of English learners at a beginner level. The discursive resources from the group interactions (spoken) were explored through qualitative analysis.

Data was collected through observations, video and audio recordings. The participants′ interactions were interpreted based on sociocultural discourse analysis (Mercer, 2004). The focus is on the analysis of the speech to identify salient features of self-regulation.

The study was designed with the aim to explore some features of self-regulatory activity in spoken discourse through collaborative work, and as an attempt to help learners become more independent in the self- access centre. These centres represent an ideal setting for the implementation of collaborative activities so learners can exercise control of their own learning in social interaction and not in isolation.

Participants

The self-access centre put out a call for the voluntary participation of basic-level English learners who wanted to practice their English speaking skills in conversation sessions within a group for an hour a week. The students′ participation was voluntary, and a self-selected, random sample of nine learners volunteered to take part in the project. Reasons given in their diaries for participating in the sessions suggested an eagerness to communicate with other students and improve speaking skills. The participants consisted of 3 males and 6 females aged between 18 and 24. All of them were English learners at the beginner level in a context where English is considered a foreign language. They were all taking a course consisting of 5 hours of English per week. In addition to the time spent on the course, these learners were required to have spent at least one hour per week undertaking independent study in the SAC as part of the course requirements.

For the analysis of the interactions, the students were given letters and numbers such as

MS1, (Male Student 1) or FS2, (Female Student 2).

The Task

The participants were asked to join in teams freely, forming three groups of three participants each. They were given a task sheet with the instructions they were expected to follow. The task selected for the purposes of this study, 'Reporting the Best News', took them three sessions to complete. It consisted of a series of activities described as follows:

1) First, the learners were given the following instructions: each team would publish an article in the newsletter of the SAC, so they needed to search for the best piece of information, selected from a set of magazines with the aim to have it included in the following issue.

2) To do so, they were asked to choose one of the magazines displayed on the tables in the room, flip through it, and select and read the article that they thought was worth including.

3) Then, they identified and highlighted the main information to report it to their peers.

4) Finally, as a team they discussed and decided the information they wanted to include in the students' newsletter.

The conversations were recorded and filmed while they were completing the task.

Results and Discussion

The analysis of talk can serve as a tool to understand how people "think collectively" or "interthink" in the pursuit of the solution of a problem or the completion of an activity (Mercer, 2004, p. 138). According to Mercer, sociocultural discourse analysis focuses on the functions of language when used in the "pursuit of intellectual activity" (Mercer, 2004, p. 141). Therefore, keeping this in mind, we extracted three segments of conversation from the student dialogues to illustrate some aspects of self-regulatory behaviour. As an overview, Table 1 summarizes several features of self-regulation, looking at various functions and examples from the three segments presented in the appendix. We will focus on these in the discussion that follows.

First, learners engage in the task, appropriating it for themselves, as can be seen in the case of MS1 (line 1). Here the statements "*I choose...*" and "*my article...*" express an action

taken, with the speaker assuming the role of an empowered decision-taker. The use of space deixis such as "here" (in lines 17, 22, 23, 25, 36 and 38) or "this" and in "in this moment" (line 27), is also common. This perhaps indicates the intention of the learners in the task to reassert their role as a main participant.

Interaction in a foreign language forces the learners to express their ideas, but emotional stress may raise barriers to communication. However, when others intervene by asking questions and complementing ideas, affective regulation happens in the communication between second language learners. To illustrate the aforementioned, let us have a look at the first segment, in line 1. The discourse becomes vague and confusing, the anxiety is manifested with the emergence of isolated elliptical phrases *"I... talk about her... his autobiography because it's not general because talks about Tour de France... Because, he's very .... Mmm"*. MS1 tries to find the best way to express ideas and be understood. The intervention of FS2 and FS3 (line 2 and 4) helped regulate the tension and MS1 (line 3) regains his confidence because he has been understood as he continues explaining.

Table 1: Self-Regulation in Learner's Dialogues

Self-regulation category	Explanation	Samples	Lines
Student's involvement	The student uses deitics to show he/she is part of the conversation and positions him/herself in the story.	I choose… **My** article talks about… In **this** moment…. **Here**……	1, 11, 17, 22, 23,25,27, 36, 38, 39,43, 46, 51
Student's fluency	Student attempts to keep coherent and fluent, so he/she uses some phrases even it there are errors in usage to keep the attention of the listener and not to lose continuity.	*For example……* *because…….*	1, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 25, 31, 36, 33, 36, 38
Information backup	The student gives some information and looks for some resources to support what he/she is saying	Signaling at the references where they obtained the information	8, 13, 22, 24, 36, 65
Self-correction	The student corrects him/herself after having said something grammatically wrong and he /she identifies the mistake	*"the girls is twins, are twins"* *"this is, this is, this was...";* *"her… his autobiography"*	1, 19, 43, 63
Self clarification	Students use repetition, questions or self-explanation to verify meaning and comprehension	*"In France? He live in France No? " "ah, his mom? Is his mom? is a woman?"* *"baby, a real baby, that is a baby Jesus"*	12, 43
Recalling and memorizing information	Students use repetition to try to memorize some specific information consciously	*Lance Armstrong, this is his name? Lance Armstrong* *Lance Armstrong* *Lance Armstrong*	28-31, 31-32, 56-58
Student's thoughts organization	Students use silence, pauses and fillers to take some time to organize their ideas	*"I think it's the best article, for… it's easy and the time"* *"mmmmm"*	1, 12, 13, 15, 32, 33, 39, 46, 51, 55 and 61.
Focus	Students use repetition of words or phrases to focus on the task or to keep away from distraction	*"the topic is about the, the.. in Italy,.."* *"her, her name…"*	39, 51, 55

The repeated use of the discourse markers such as *"because"* (lines 1, 9, 11, 13 15, 17, 25, 31, 36) and *"for example"* (lines 5, 36, 33, 38), even when they are misused, helps the learner MS1 to explain and justify his explanations, as if the use of these markers provide confidence to continue. The use of these words indicates an effort by the learner to maintain fluency and not to lose the attention of the listener.

In addition to discourse, it is important to highlight the importance of the use of pictures, magazines and dictionaries to regulate learning, also known as object regulation (Frawley & Lantolf, 1985). The learners try other methods to get their point across, such as indicating a page of the magazine (line 22), referring to a picture (line 24) to make sure they have understood. Objects can also lead learners to discover incidentally learning strategies in practice; for instance, in line 38, MS1 quickly reads the article to find specific information and makes use of complementary visual aids for an explanation and as a form to back up the information he is giving.

Repetition and rephrasing are both also commonly present at beginner English learners' level. These verbal re-occurrences of sentences or phrases might indicate regulation: a) in self-awareness of mistakes and self-correction as in interactions such as *"the girls is twins, are twins"* and *"this is, this is, this was..."*, b) to clarify knowledge and comprehension such as *"his mom? Is his mom? is a woman?"* and *"a baby, a real baby, that is a baby Jesus..."* where the speaker is attempting to make content clear, and c) as a strategy to help commit information to memory such as in the dialogue from lines 28-32, where the speakers repeat the name of the cyclist several times. Here the intention of FS3 is to memorize the information; we can see something similar in intervention 32 when the learner repeated *"the Tour of France"*.

Another characteristic of self-regulation is the use of pauses and fillers (Centeno-Cortés & Jiménez-Jiménez, 2004) especially at the elementary stage of language learning. According to some researchers, learners use pauses as a strategy to plan what they will say. Fillers, sounds with no meaning, such as *"mmmm",* and silences such as in *"I think it's the best article, for... it's easy and the time"* (line 46) are used to plan language before saying something and monitor how one is expressing him/herself (lines 1, 12, 13, 15, 32, 33, 39, 51, 55 and 61).

Furthermore, the use of new vocabulary also shows self-regulatory behaviour since the learners are taking the risk of using what they have learned during their reading. This is demonstrated in line 17 with the use of *"fruitful",* and line 41 with *"he set up a crib, crib is a pesebre"*. In this last line of the segment, FS1 uses Spanish to explain the meaning of *"crib"* as a form to scaffold and regulate the learning.

Some studies have concluded that repetition of words or phrases serve as a form of

self-regulation (DiCamilla & Antón, 2004) in that they are meant to focus the speaker on the problem or the task, as illustrated in line 39 *"the topic is about the, the…in Italy,.."*, line 51 *"her, her name..."*, line 55 *"for she, for she..."*. According to DiCamilla and Anton, repetition also serves as a social and cognitive mediator to complete a task.

The first language plays a prime role in the process of self-regulation, since our thinking processes are supported by what was constructed originally in the L1 (Ushakova, 1994). Learners tend to repeat to themselves, or others, difficult forms in the L2 and translate them to the L1 for a better understanding (Donato, 1994), as in the intervention *"for cure herself, para una cura para ella misma"* (line 58). The use of L1 or cognates when the learners do not know a word (such as in *"padre"*, instead of *"priest"* in line 39) can be considered a compensatory communicative strategy that leads to self-regulation in their social participation. Learners become engaged in the activity and suddenly code-switch from L2 to L1 without noticing, especially with words that seem very similar to the L1, as in the case of the use of *"carrera"* instead of *"career"* (line 53).

In addition to the features mentioned before, private speech is one of the major signs of self-regulation. Learners whisper or talk to themselves; for example, in line 61, FS2 produces private speech in self-correction "she *was...no, no, no, she was...*"; in between the pause, she had an idea, but reconsidered, expressing that by saying to herself *"no, no, no"*. Similarly, at the end of intervention 61, FS2 starts having trouble with dates *"...in Spring Break in one thousand este, ninety hundred, no, one thousand nine hundred three no, este, (laughs) como digo noventa?"* She twice tries to say the date correctly, but finally asks for help using L1. In her effort, she notices she is not doing it right, so in discourse she uses the corrective *"no"* to herself as a manifestation of private speech. Subsequently MS3 replies (line 62) and tries the same correction to himself by using *"nineteen, no, ninety"*.

Not all the language produced in the context of EFL is intended for exchanging information or for the purpose of communicating, rather some is used for strategic purposes and to mediate the learning process (Donato, 1994). Regulation is also provided by others as co-regulation, when learners support each other affectively, such as in lines 44: "It's fine!" and 67: "oh, really? Very beautiful, good", both give a positive assessment to their partner's participation. In a sense, it is a manifestation of involvement in the task and regulation.

In summary, the preceding examples present illustrations of how beginners use a variety of strategic actions to self-regulate their interactions. This is something they will not achieve in isolation, thus the necessity to provide them with opportunities to socialize and interact in their learning.

Conclusions

The data presented in this article are framed in reference to self-regulation. That is to say, the discursive linguistic elements are important not just in the process of language learning, but also in the way they mediate learners' interactions so self-regulation can take place. Furthermore, the findings of the discourse analysis also show evidence of regulation of the self through the learner's performance in the activity. Regulation is present in the engagement, the focus, and the organization of knowledge while the learners are doing the tasks (see Table 1).

The study analysed meaning of the content of the discourse in terms of regulatory functions as expressed by the three groups of beginner-level language learners eager to practice their English. We argue that the task the learners engaged in fostered their willingness to communicate, so they could interact with each other. The data analysis supports this claim in showing how learners took risks and controlled themselves in the cognitive, affective and social aspects in order to carry out the task. At this level of language development, regulation is oriented to the objective of performing the task, so students use a series of communication strategies to express themselves, negotiating meaning to overcome miscommunication. It seems reasonable to assume that this particular task gave learners a sense of what they were able to do with the language.

Learners working in collaboration with others regulate their knowledge in many different ways. In this particular study, it could be observed that most learners actively participated in the discussion and were engaged in their language learning process by using magazines and pictures, utilizing the new vocabulary, using repetition focusing on specific information, and using L1 as a tool to clarify concepts.

Making decisions about their own learning and the kind of activities they wish to engage in helps learners move from other-regulation to self-regulation because this is an essential element of the self-regulatory development. Therefore, it should be considered and

encouraged through activities that promote social interaction.

Since their foundation, self-access centres have aimed to support individual learning. Nevertheless, trends have changed and research has demonstrated that it is not only in isolation that students can develop their cognitive abilities, but also through collaborative work. These centres are an ideal space to provide learners with opportunities to interact in such a way. Therefore, our self-access centres should promote the development of self-regulation by implementing activities for language learners to socialize and learn with and from others.

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Appendix

Transcriptions of Conversations

Conversation segment 1 Team 1

(Learners talked about Lance Armstrong, a professional cyclist).

1   **MS1:** I choose the magazine about the sports.

My article talks about one cyclist, but it's Lance Armstrong.

I... talk about her... his autobiography because it's not general because talks about Tour de France... Because, he's very .... Mmm and, the year is not specific because it's talks about what he was doing.

2   **FS2:** Is about his life?

3   **MS1:** aha, for his life, talks about his family, his job, all that.

4   **FS3:** correct me, he has bad siblings no?

5   **MS1:** yes, but it's, for example... this magazine is older.

6   **FS3:** ah, ok

7   **MS1:** and no

8   **FS2:** and he doesn't know about this (pointing at the magazine to S1)?.

9   **MS1:** aha, he doesn't know

What else? Yes because later, he told about....

10   **FS2:** his records

11   **MS1:** In this moment, he said the Tour de France was the best because he has seven Tour de France.

12   **FS2:** Mmmm. Where he live? In France? He live in France? No?

13   **MS1:** No, it's no say..... (checking and fast reading the article) because, only says that...

14   **FS3:** Yes, he's from France, no?

15   **MS1:** yes, yes, because... only talks about France and the tour of France, Lance Armstrong and his family.

16   **FS2.** Ok

17   **MS1:** because here it says it's a ...(inaudible)... and fruitful player and talks about his kids that are three, two is twins

18   **FS3:** Three? Ok two kids? Two are twins?

19   **MS1:** aha, it's a boy and two girls, the girls is twins, are twins.

20   **FS3:** Ah, ok

21   **MS1:** and that's all.

22   **FS3:** He came here for cancer cure, no? maybe I saw a picture here, this, no? (pointing at the page where there is a picture)

23   **MS1:** here, well, here says that his mom has cancer

24   **FS2:** ah, his mom? Is his mom? is a woman? (looking at the picture in the magazine)? No, It's a men, no?

25   **MS1:** it's a men, oh, yes, Lance Armstrong has cancer because here it says "with mom Linda - said the patient".

26   **FS2:** Is he at home or he's at...(hospital is omitted)?

27   **MS1:** In this moment, I don't know............. That's all.

28   **FS3:** Lance Armstrong, this is his name?

29   **MS1:** Lance Armstrong

30   **FS3:** Lance Armstrong

31   **MS1:** Lance Armstrong.
Yes, because the focus of this article is more Lance Armstrong and the Tour de France.

32   **FS2:** The Tour of France, yes
And... it's not talking about any years?

33   **MS1:** No. Well, for example....

35   **FS2:** yes, it's like a history.

36   **MS1:** yes, it's like a autobiography? Because, here, for example, in ninety nine, he stops and for example, here, it's other, it's other (signaling at a list of dates when Armstrong won the Tour de France)

37   **FS2:** he's the winner

38   **MS1:** For example, here, in one thousand ninety (sic) eighty six, at the age of fifteen turned (inaudible) the area. Talks about general, it's not specific time.

Conversation segment 2, Team 2

(Learners talked about the representation of Jesus birth at Christmas).

39   **FS1:** This was in... Italy. It's a mmm, the topic is about the, the.. in Italy,.. the people doesn't know what happened in Christmas Day.
Saint Francis of Asis, maybe is a... padre? He want to find the way to say to other

people the Christmas history.

40   **FS2:** How?

41   **FS1:** He set up a crib, crib is a <u>pesebre.</u>

42   **FS3:** (nodded without saying a word)

43   **FS1:** In a mountain with live animals with people acts about the kids, about the angels, about the something... person real.

It was a hit in this time and he had to repeat every year the Christmas representation with the animals and people live (....) how is the history for the Christmas for the kids, he decide to bring a one actor more, that it was .. a baby, a real baby, that is a baby Jesus at this time. This is, this is, this was the way to find how is Christmas Day. This is what, this happened in Italy.

44   **FS2:** It's fine!

45   **FS1:** For me it's interesting.

46   **FS3:** I think it's the best article, for... it's easy and the time. What you think?

47   **FS2:** Yes, it's the best, December and Christmas, it's good

Conversation segment 3, Team 3

(the learners talked about a famous artist who had got health problems)

48   **MS1:** will you? (looking at S2)

49   **FS2:** I?

50   **MS1:** uhum (nodding)

51   **FS2:** My article talks about this girl (showing the picture in the magazine), her, her name is Lewis, mmmm..., she's a singer of pop

52   **MS1:** uhum

53   **FS2:** and when she was about, about five years, she was three times in a hotel because she... was a part of his (sic) carrera.

54   **FS2**: His (sic) mother looks for her.

55   **FS2:** (it is) a very place for she, for she... para que ella se curara...

56   **MS3:** for cure herself

57   **FS2:** ¿Qué? (looking puzzled at **MS1**)

58   **MS1:** for cure herself, para una cura para ella misma

59   **FS2:** ah.

60   **MS1:** what for?

61   **FS2:** when she be health, she was

no, no, no , she was..... ahhh, music and drawing, ammm, but before this situation she can practice sports and arts, but, however, she has moved from Michigan to San Diego in Spring Break in one thousand este, ninety hundred, no, one thousand nine hundred three no, este, (laughs) como digo noventa?

62   **MS3:** nineteen, no, ninety

63   **FS2:** ok, ninety three after she was in a program of singing... singers.

64   **FS2:** In February she lograr?

65   **MS3:** (looks up in a dictionary) ...lograr, achieve?

66   **FS2**: She achieve ten, five hundred, five hundred copies of discs, in this moment she was a famous singer pop.

67   **MS1:** oh, really? Very beautiful, good.

Redesigning an Independent Learning Course Component: Recognizing the Role of Instructor as Guide

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Abstract

This paper describes how an Independent Study course component is being revised to include a greater focus on teacher-guided goal-setting and reflection, inspired by Nunan's (1997) five levels of autonomy. It reports the findings of a pre-study in which the new component was trialled in 14 classes, and more in-depth qualitative findings from my own class, aimed at establishing the pros and cons of the new component for both students and teachers. Finally, I will report on improvements made following the pre-trial, and future research aims.

Keywords: reflection, autonomy, independent study, goal-setting

The idea that learners need to be able to take charge of their own learning in order to be successful has become widely accepted in language teaching, and is a guiding principle at Kanda University of International Studies. We are lucky to have an attractive Self-Access Learning Centre (SALC) that students often cite as one of their primary reasons for choosing the university. Despite this we still face the question of how best to encourage independence and the development of student autonomy without forcing it.

Many students I have talked with, especially those with less language proficiency, say that while they are motivated to make the most of facilities such as the SALC or its Learning Advisors, they hesitate to do so. They report lacking the courage to discuss their wants and needs in English, or struggling to identify their wants and needs in the first place. While a self-access centre is not the only context in which students can take charge of their learning, such conversations suggest that many learners do not come to Kanda well-equipped to do so, no matter how much they might want to.

This observation formed the starting point for my 2013 redesign of the Independent Learning Component of Kanda's Basic English Proficiency Program (BEPP) course, a compulsory course taught throughout the freshman year, taken by all students in the English program. Although this is a multi-skill course, which is taken alongside a reading-writing course and basic grammar instruction, its primary focus is on spoken interaction.

Originally, the Independent Learning Component had been a series of one-off lessons in the introductory "Orientation Unit" of BEPP. However, on the basis of teacher feedback and future

curriculum directions, the decision was made to extend it to allow for several cycles of independent study and reflection throughout the freshman year. A grade weighting was also given to indicate the component's importance and ensure that all teachers covered it. This paper will describe and evaluate the redesign of the Independent Learning Component, and outline aims for the future.

The Old Course

The curriculum at Kanda is currently in transition from a model focussed on communicative language tasks and individualisation referred to as a "personal curriculum" (see Johnson, 2002, p. 2), to a process-based framework incorporating a strong focus on self-analysis and reflection. With this in mind, in 2012 feedback on existing BEPP materials was collected from teachers, with the goal of addressing problem areas and updating materials to better reflect the new framework. Teachers identified the existing Independent Study Component as being in need of an overhaul, which I undertook to do in my capacity as a BEPP project committee member.

The existing materials were designed to be taught to freshman students in the first few weeks of semester one. They asked students to identify a target skill to work on, and to choose three activities which would help them to improve this skill. No suggestions of possible skills or activities were given to students; teachers who wished to provide scaffolding were not given guidance as to how to do so. The students were then given several weeks in which to try their activities, inside or outside class at teacher discretion. In final teacher consultations, students were asked to discuss the success of their independent study activities.

With almost no scaffolding or support, and an unlimited choice of potential target skills and activities, students frequently chose poorly matched goals and activities (such as "I will read books to improve my pronunciation"), and felt pressure to report success at the end. Once the consultation had been completed, most teachers dropped the issue of independent study due to the component's lack of success the first time around and the lack of support for turning it into a regular part of classroom practice. Most teachers reported that it was too time consuming and not beneficial enough to justify the classroom time needed, especially as students' independent study did not factor in final grades.

The Revised Course

I felt that the existing materials, while strong on individual student choice, failed to support the students in developing their ability to choose goals and learning activities effectively. Rather than expecting students to demonstrate a substantial degree of autonomous behaviour from the beginning, I hoped instead to create an ongoing process of goal-setting and reflection that would aim to develop their capacity to make informed decisions about their learning. I also felt that

students needed greater guidance and support from the teacher. To better identify the stages towards autonomous learning and support them through the revised curriculum, I used Nunan's (1997) five levels of autonomy: awareness, involvement, intervention, creation, and transcendence.

In the revised course, students would first focus on increasing their **awareness** (level 1) of learning strategies, their own learning style, and of choice in language learning. At the same time they would enhance their **involvement** (2) by making choices about their learning based on a range of suggestions provided by the teacher. The teacher would also provide support for learners to modify activities or goals to suit their needs, what Nunan calls **intervention** (3). The **creation** (4) of goals, objectives and tasks would be encouraged but not required of students until they were judged to be ready. **Transcendence** (5), in which students connect what they have learned to the outside world, is considered a broad goal for the program as a whole, but not an explicit focus.

The new Independent Learning Component was given a 10% grade weighting within the Basic English Proficiency Program, and was designed to be revisited throughout the semester at flexible intervals with differing degrees of teacher intervention. With my low tier class, for example, students set goals and identified activities in class with my guidance, then had a week to try their activity and a week to complete a reflection.

In the initial year of the project, we decided to focus on improving speaking skills, which most new students identify as a weakness. Following a series of **awareness**-raising activities about learning styles and preferences, students recorded an initial diagnostic discussion, and then used a combination of teacher feedback and their own interests and needs to identify a goal from a list: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and discussion skills (**involvement**).

Based on shared interests, students formed groups and either chose an activity that suited their goal from a list, or visited the SALC with a teacher or learning advisor (**involvement**). They were given time to complete their chosen activity, and then asked to reflect on what they had done, how useful it had been, and what they would change in the future (**intervention**). This reflection was also combined with an in-class speaking activity, enabling students to reflect more concretely on whether their study activity had helped them. These stages cycled throughout the semester, and I met with every student in my class at least twice to discuss their progress.

Initial Findings

The materials were trialled in 14 classes in the low- and mid-tiers (approximately 20 students per class) for one semester, with teacher feedback collected at the end of the semester. I carried out research on my low-tier class of twenty students, taking field notes, collecting student reflections and recording 30 minutes of consultation with each student. I set out to analyse how students approached the activity, how they viewed and dealt with poor study choices, and to explore

the pros and cons of the new component model for students and teachers with a view to future changes.

Most of my students took well to the project, seeing it as an opportunity to explore the resources available to them. They tended to be more honest in face-to-face consultations than in their written reflections, especially when admitting that they had not found a study activity motivating or useful. This allowed me to clarify both that enjoyment does not necessarily detract from learning, and that they were allowed to have and voice negative opinions when they did not enjoy an activity. A number of students discovered new study activities that they found motivating, and others experienced success in modifying activities to better suit their goals and preferences.

There were a few students who I felt benefited less from the project. Several repeatedly chose gap-fill exercises from the same high school grammar textbook, and so were unable to use comparison between their study experiences as a means of evaluating activities. Finally, two of the twenty students consistently failed to provide any meaningful reflection on their study, or to actually complete their planned study. This came in spite of the fact that their reflections were assessed; I suspect that these students did not see the value of independent study.

In a final reflection on the four cycles of goal-setting and reflection we completed in semester one, 19 of 20 students felt that their skills had improved, and 17 felt that the goal-setting project had helped their English skills in general. While there is a tendency for students to "seek to please the teacher" by reporting positively on their study experience and trying to manifest the 'autonomous' behaviours expected of them (Breen & Mann, 1997, p. 143), I did notice an increase in student confidence, especially in using the meta-language of talking about study. Students seemed more confident in accessing and evaluating the resources available to them outside the classroom, and I also felt more aware of students' needs and wants, enabling more targeted teacher interventions in class.

On the negative side, teacher feedback pointed to the heavy workload for teachers, who were required to identify activities and guide students individually. Especially for students with a low English level and little experience of making decisions about their study, student choice was probably still too wide open. This freedom of choice also allowed students to make conservative choices, and therefore not to push themselves to explore new activities or supplement their existing awareness of study resources.

Future of the Project

Based on the findings of this trial period, and the teacher feedback, I revised the materials again. The diagnostic test was dropped, as it was felt to be too soon to accurately measure student weaknesses, and too daunting for new students. The in-class speaking activity was also dropped, as

it was felt to be a misleading measure of whether a study activity had been beneficial. In response to feedback that both teachers and students needed more support, I introduced what I have termed a ʻstrong modelʼ of the component, in which teachers preselect a range of activities, rather than have students identify their own goals and then find activities to fit those goals as in the initial ʻweak modelʼ. This allows students to focus on managing their learning in class and evaluating their choices in reflection, and is recommended for lower-level classes. Teachers can choose between the two models depending on the needs of their students.

The dual model version of the Independent Learning Component is being trialled in the 2014 academic year. In my class, we are following the ʻstrong modelʼ, which has meant less focus on the individual setting of goals and more emphasis on group-based activities and reflection. In terms of research, this year I hope to explore changes in student motivation and beliefs about language learning more deeply, using pre- and post-test questionnaires, reflection and consultation data, and final interviews with selected students. I also intend to explore the role of L1 in supporting and extending student reflection.

Notes on the contributor

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Developing Autonomous Self-Regulated Readers in an Extensive Reading Program

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Abstract

Reading is an important skill to acquire for overall language proficiency. Sustained reading skill improvement and reading motivation are needed to become a fluent reader and to develop a positive reading identity. Students are better able to maintain ongoing reading development by becoming autonomous and self-regulated readers. This paper explains the benefits of developing self-regulated readers through an extensive reading program, where students read many interesting books at an appropriate level of difficulty. Students and teachers made use of an extensive reading module for an open-source audience response system. Using this system provides autonomous learning conditions that enable students to read books extensively by choosing books, monitoring, and reflecting on books read. Teachers can monitor students through summaries of the number of books read by each student, estimates of book difficulty, and popularity ratings of the books. Empirical data from our work-in-progress that was presented in Lake and Holster (2013) shows how extensive reading leads to gains in reading speed, reading motivation, and a positive reading identity.

Keywords: self-regulated reading, autonomous readers, positive L2 reading-self, reading motivation, extensive reading

Becoming a strong second language (L2) reader takes much time, effort, and motivation. L2 reader motivation may be influenced by "top-down" dispositional motivations or more "bottom-up" momentary states, that is, L2 readers may exhibit motivations from general reading attitudes or reading identities (Hall, 2012; Lake, 2014; Richardson & Eccles, 2007) that are relatively stable and trait-like or from contextual, situational, fleeting feelings that are more dynamic and state-like (Schiefele, Schaffner, Moller, & Wigfield, 2012). Both types of reading motivations influence the self-regulation of reading. This study explains and examines how self-regulated L2 readers and their motivations can change over an L2 reading course through the use of graded readers and an open-source audience response system in an extensive reading program.

Literature Review

Extensive reading

Extensive reading involves students reading many stories or informative texts at an appropriate level of difficulty that the readers choose themselves. As Davis (1995) explains, "pupils are given the time, encouragement, and materials to read pleasurably, at their own level, as many books as they can, without the pressures of testing or marks" (p. 320). Studies have shown that extensive reading can lead to improvements in vocabulary, writing, motivation, reading identity, speaking, listening, spelling, grammar, and, of course, reading abilities (Bamford & Day, 2004; Cirocki, 2009; Day & Bamford, 1998; Day et al., 2011; Grabe & Stoller, 2011; Iwahori, 2008; Lake, 2014; Nation, 2009). Often extensive reading is contrasted with intensive reading where students are reading short, difficult passages from a text chosen by the teacher (Waring, 2011). Even in an academic reading program with typical reading textbooks, it is important to develop reading fluency. The "best way to develop reading fluency is through extensive reading" (Seymour & Walsh, 2006, p. 39). Therefore, it is important to incorporate an extensive reading component into the program.

In an extensive reading program, students choose books that are meaningful and interesting to them. The successful reading of many books develops positive competence beliefs about reading that leads to higher levels of reading motivation (Guthrie, Wigfield, & Perencevich, 2004; Schiefele et al., 2012). The large amount of input over time increases implicit knowledge of vocabulary and reading that also helps to develop other language skills contributing to overall improvement in language proficiency (Hunt & Beglar, 2005). In two different studies, Lake and Holster (2012) and Lake (2014) show how an extensive reading program led to student improvement in reading identity, reading motivation, and reading speed.

Fluency

Fluency has to do with reading with automaticity and comprehension (Grabe, 2009; Grabe & Stoller, 2011). Automaticity in reading involves the rapid processing of text without conscious awareness. Comprehension comes from the rapid recognition of word parts, words, and greater lengths of text. There needs to be a certain degree of speed to allow complete units to be processed in working memory so that meaning can be extracted. For example, letters need to be recognized so that

words and phrases can form and give meaning, and words and phrases need to be recognized so that sentences can form and provide meaning. Reading with fluency can lead to greater comprehension because it contributes to understanding of larger units of text and more cognitive resources can be employed for strategies or text interpretation (Grabe, 2009; Grabe & Stoller, 2011).

Graded readers

Extensive reading programs typically make use of graded readers. These are books that are graded or leveled based on text complexity. Editors and publishers usually work with some formula that controls for vocabulary range and type of grammar allowed. Lower level graded readers will have higher frequency vocabulary with a close range of words and grammar, while higher level readers will have less frequent words in a greater range and more complex grammar.

Self-regulation

Self-regulated learning involves taking active control of learning and is often divided into phases of forethought, performance, and self-reflection (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011). Activities in the forethought phase include actions such as forming goals, planning, and building motivation. In the performance phase, activities include actions such as monitoring learning and interest, and metacognitive monitoring of learning. Activities in the self-reflection phase include such actions as self-evaluation, causal attributions of success or failure, and reflecting on positive feelings of liking or enjoying the activity.

Self-regulated reading carries over these pre-activity, during activity, and post-activity phases into the domain of reading (Guthrie et al., 2004; Schunk & Zimmerman, 1997; Tonks & Taboada, 2011). Activities in the forethought phase include such actions as gauging reading ability, gauging text complexity, gauging self-efficacy, matching personal interests with texts, setting number of books per week goals, and setting time per week or scheduling goals. In the performance phase, activities include such actions as going to the library to check out books; monitoring books for difficulty—abandon if too high, continue if not; monitoring books for interest—abandon if too low, continue if not; and monitoring for understanding. Activities in the self-reflection phase include such actions as reflecting on the difficulty, understanding, fluency, enjoyment and impressions of the book.

Self-regulated reading may be confused with reading strategies. Common reading strategies or study strategies include SQ3R, PQRST, and KWL tables. These mnemonics refer to actions students take as they read. SQ3R refers to survey/skim, question, read, recite/recall, and review. PQRST refers to preview, question, read, summarize, and test. KWL refers to what the student knows, wants to know, and learned, which is presented in a table or chart. These strategies are often practiced during intensive reading instruction, and while they have pre-reading, reading, and post-reading elements they are probably better understood as a form of micro-self-regulated learning. In contrast, for our extensive reading study we are focusing on a more macro-form of self-regulation.

Problems with Monitoring ER

Ideally, students in an extensive reading program read many interesting books that they choose themselves and develop intrinsic motivation and an identity as a reader (Lake, 2014). Tests, quizzes, book reports, and other types of monitoring methods by teachers that are focused on specific details, if used with extensive reading, can lead to intensive reading and extrinsic motivation. Strict monitoring of specific details and narrow performance goals leads to problems associated with extrinsic motivation such as avoidance strategies, anxiety, and demotivation (Assor & Kaplan, 2001; Ryan & Connell, 1989; Ryan & La Guardia, 1999; Stefanou, Perencevich, DiCinto, & Turner, 2004). Strict formal assessments may make the students focus more on the assessment than reading. Formal assessments can contribute to a shift from student autonomy, choices, self-regulation and intrinsic reading motivation to teacher-regulation and extrinsic motivation (Krashen, 2004, 2011).

If students shift their intrinsic motivation to extrinsic motivation, then extensive reading may be abandoned as soon as the external regulation is removed. If intrinsic motivation can be maintained it may lead to the development of a positive L2 reading self and an even more general positive L2 self (Lake, 2013, 2014). As pointed out in first language contexts, "the real purpose of reading instruction is the development of individuals who will engage in personal reading for pursuit of their interests, needs, recreation, practical and academic purposes, and for just pure pleasure" (Flippo, 2005, p. 21). To put it simply, in the context of second language

reading, "our long-term goal is to have students who do not stop reading when the reading class is over" (Hudson, 2007, p. 29).

Monitoring Solution

A solution to the monitoring problem is to have students self-monitor. A key component of self-regulation is monitoring and taking responsibility for learning. This encourages autonomous learning, maintains intrinsic motivation, and helps develop self-regulated reading. Using a self-report survey that asks for responses that require general understanding of the texts (for example, "Did you enjoy the book?" or "How quickly did you read the book?") takes little time to complete while keeping the students mindful that readings should be fluent and enjoyable. Thus, the externally monitored, minimally invasive self-reports with gentle reminders of enjoyment and fluency may lead over the school year to an internalization of self-regulated reading.

Keeping track of surveys could be impractical with physical copies because of the large number of different books by different readers in a reading program. With an online survey and database system, collecting information for teachers and students is relatively quick and easy. In this study, a Mobile Audience Response System (MOARS) with an extensive reading add-on was used. MOARS is a free, open-source audience response system (more information and free downloads can be found at MOARS.com; Pellowe, 2010). An additional free open-source extensive reading add-on module was also used. With the system, students can use phones or other mobile devices or regular computers to take quizzes or surveys; in this case, it was the graded reader survey. Teachers can then give feedback to individual students or classes about how many books they have read. For example, after the second week of classes a teacher could give individual feedback that a student has read "X number of books" and that "most students in class have read over 5 books" to provide students with a normative sense of where they are in relation to the group. Alternatively, a teacher could give more aspirational feedback such as "some students have read more than 10 books" to show what some students have found possible.

In addition to the student information, teachers or administrators can also look at the graded reader information such as the relative difficulty of the books, or what books are interesting, or which ones are often being read. Using this information could guide student advice or future library book purchases. For those interested in research, the extensive reading add-on for MOARS allows a download of formatted

data and a control file for a many-faceted Rasch measurement (MFRM) for use in Facets software available from winsteps.com (Linacre, 1994, 2010). This makes it possible for teachers or researchers to do a more in-depth analysis of the data.

Work-in-Progress

For our current study that we reported on in our presentation at the Self-regulation in Foreign Language Learning: Shared Perspectives symposium held at Shimonoseki City University (Lake & Holster, 2013) we used data collected with MOARS and also separately collected motivation data and reading speed data. The motivation data was from self-reports of a positive L2 reading self, L2 reading self-efficacy, and L2 reading anxiety. (For more information on reading motivation, positive L2 reading self, L2 reading self-efficacy and extensive reading see Lake, 2014.) The reading speed tests were taken from Quinn, Nation, and Millett (2007).

The participants in our study were first year students in a public university in western Japan. They were all in an academic English program with classes in reading, listening, writing, and communication skills. The motivation surveys were given at the beginning of the academic year, mid-year, and at the end of the academic year. The reading speed tests were given at the beginning of the semester, mid-semester, and at the end of the semester, for two semesters.

Preliminary general findings from the data gathered with MOARS were that the system provided practical, reliable measurement of students and books. This allows for feedback to students and teachers. In addition, more specific findings from the Facets analysis showed that for group gains in reading ability a minimum of 20 books needed to be read, but for substantive individual gains in ability a realistic number is 40 to 50 books per semester, or about 100 books per year. The Facets analysis of the books showed that different publishers' self-reported book levels increased in difficulty on average. However, for some publishers the variation in difficulty within a level often overlapped considerably with other levels. This shows that it cannot be assumed that a published book at one level will be easier or more difficult than a book at another level. Students need to be actively engaged in choosing books that are suitable for reading fluently at their own levels.

We found that reading speed in words per minute correlated with: proficiency as measured by the TOEFL ITP ($r = .49$); positive L2 reading self ($r = .48$); L2 reading anxiety (-.35); and L2 reading motivation ($r = .45$). Students in our reading

program showed an average increase in their reading speed of 23 words per minute over a semester. However, we found some problems with the reading tests used to measure speed because of the differing text complexity; as a result the reading speed may need to be adjusted (Lake, Holster, & Pellowe, 2014).

To be an autonomous and self-regulated reader it is important to have a positive L2 reader identity or positive L2 reading self (Lake, 2014). Our L2 reading self measure correlated with: L2 reading anxiety ($r = -.52$); L2 reading motivation ($r = .64$); unadjusted raw reading speed in words per minute ($r = .48$); institutional lexico-grammar test ($r = .41$); and proficiency as measured by the TOEFL ITP ($r = .41$).

Conclusion

As part of a work-in-progress, and from previous studies (Lake, 2014; Lake & Holster, 2012), we found that autonomous learning conditions can help students develop as self-regulated readers. Through the use of data generated by MOARS we were able to give teachers and students feedback that helps them monitor progress.

Through the use of graded readers in an extensive reading program, students gained in reading speed, developed a more positive L2 reading self, and increased L2 reading motivation. Students' L2 reading anxiety showed a negative relationship to a positive L2 reading self, L2 reading motivation, and reading speed. If students are to be able to read outside the classroom, they will need to be autonomous self-regulated readers, and this study shows that a foundation to develop as such can be built in an extensive reading program. This has the potential to help students in the future as they read for personal and academic interests, and far into the future as lifelong readers.

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Bringing Learner Self-Regulation Practices Forward

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Abstract

This paper outlines one method through which learner self-regulation can be promoted in CEFR-informed courses using a learning cycle. Previous reports of learning cycles in use have not adequately described how they can be operationalised within the classroom—typically, they have been limited to descriptions of the cycle alone. This paper provides specific examples of how a CEFR-informed learning cycle has been implemented in an EFL process writing class. Cyclical learning and the CEFR as the tools for bringing learner self-regulation practices forward are first introduced. Next, a description of self-regulation practices in the classroom context using the example of an essay writing task in a process writing class is provided. The discussion then focuses on how instructors can encourage learners to carry their self-regulation practices forward to their future learning once a class has been completed. We conclude by suggesting possible benefits of this learning approach, and future directions for research.

Keywords: CEFR, self-regulation, learning cycles, action research, process writing

Self-regulation has become an important consideration in language learning (Cohen & Macaro, 2007; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001). Despite a proliferation in publications on language learning strategies and strategy instruction (Oxford, 2013; 1990), classroom teachers remain concerned with how to operationalise such strategies for teaching and learning (Gu, 2013). This paper introduces the process of how self-regulated learning was fostered in Japanese university English majors using learning cycles informed by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in the EFL writing classes of one of the authors. The following sections introduce learning cycles and the CEFR, describe how they link together in mobilising learners with the skills they need to self-regulate, and explain how learning cycles have been implemented in a CEFR-informed classroom.

Self-Regulation Tools: The CEFR, the ELP and the Learning Cycle

This section introduces the three tools which underpin learner training in self-regulation in the process writing class discussed in this paper: the CEFR, one of its supporting resources, the European Language Portfolio (ELP), and the learning cycle. We are discussing these three tools as we would like readers to understand that in adopting teaching practices intended to promote self-regulation it is not necessary to start from scratch in the development of materials: the CEFR and the ELP, in combination with a learning cycle, provide many, if not most, of the resources and materials that teachers may require to incorporate practices designed to foster learner self-regulation in their own context.

The CEFR and European Language Portfolio

The CEFR (Council of Europe [COE], 2001) is designed to be an extensive, coherent, and transparent reference system to describe communicative language competences. It has also become an important benchmark with which to align language learning programmes (COE, 2001). Moreover, the CEFR promotes the inclusion of a learning cycle in language learning (among other learning strategies, see Little, 2006) for the purposes of developing the learner's ability to self-regulate (Mariani, 2004).

It functions via a reference grid (COE, 2001) which describes each level of each skill through a descriptor. For example, a B2 Writing descriptor, also known as a *can do* statement, is as follows: *I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view* (p. 23). For each language skill at each level (e.g., B2 Writing), the grid is further broken down into the *Goal-setting and Self-assessment checklists* of *can do* statements. These checklists provide eight to ten *can do* statements, which describe each skill level of the CEFR in detail, and which learners can use to target progression on specific levels of the CEFR. The checklists can be found in the appendix of the ELP in English and other European languages. A bilingual English-Japanese version, the *Language Portfolio for Japanese University* (LP) is also available (FLP SIG, 2009) and was used in the class under discussion in this paper. The ELP is designed to be a reflective implementation tool of the CEFR, and for language learning in general. The pedagogical functions of the ELP are to foster learner autonomy by promoting reflective learning and learner

responsibility through self-evaluation and goal-setting for language learning (see Little, 2010 and Kühn & Cavana, 2012 for introductions to the pedagogical implementation of the ELP). Little (2010) suggests that CEFR-informed initiatives are most likely to succeed if generally accepted *can do* checklists serve as the key reference point for processes of reflective teaching/learning in which self-assessment plays a central role.

The learning cycle

Learning cycles, which include assessment of and reflection on the achievement of learning goals, can raise learners' awareness about what they may need to focus on in their language learning. While many cycles have been presented in relation to general learning (Kolb, 1984) and learner autonomy (Little & Perclová, 2001), the four-stage learning cycle in question (originally from O'Dwyer, 2010) differs in its intention by directly linking assigned classroom tasks with learning goals, to generally create a connectedness between teaching and learning in the classroom. The four stages are: Learning Stage Outline; Self-assessment & Goal-setting; Learning Stage; and Reflection (Figure 1). The implementation of this cycle has been previously explained in depth in relation to task-based language teaching classes (O'Dwyer, Imig & Nagai, 2014).
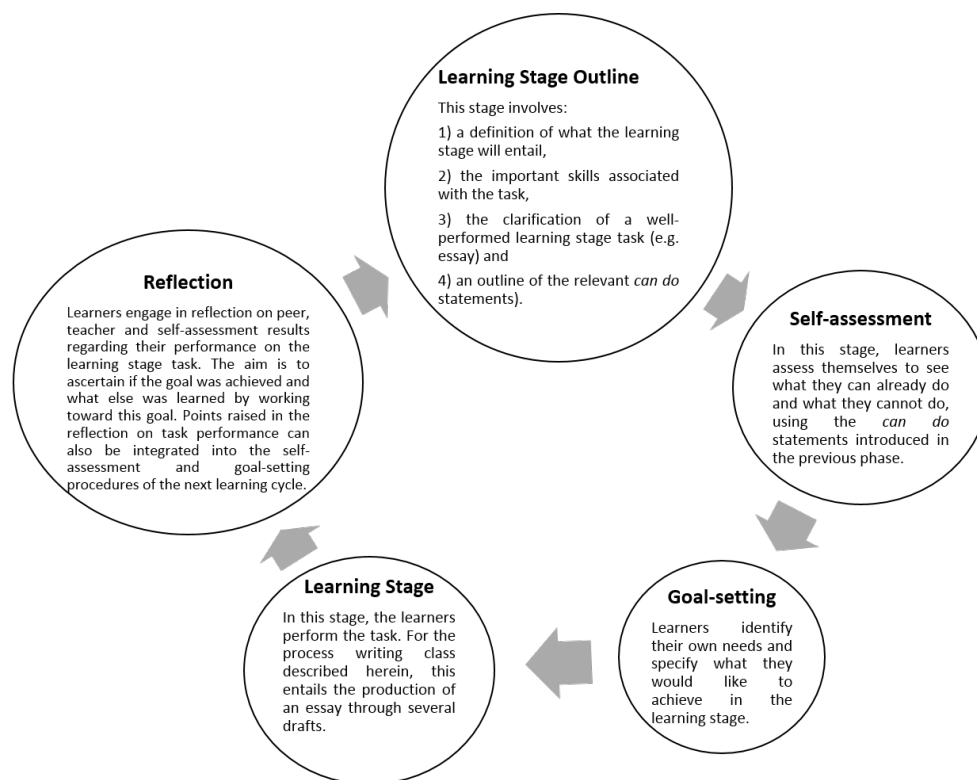
Figure 1. Learning Cycle (modified from O'Dwyer, 2010)

The CEFR and self-regulation

In the CEFR, language is viewed in an action-oriented way, meaning that the language user or learner must draw upon a variety of both linguistic and non-linguistic competences to accomplish a task. The CEFR promotes the teaching philosophy of training language learners to behave as social agents and intercultural speakers (Navajas & Ferrer, 2012) with learner autonomy and self-regulation being developed through class activities and learner training (Lantolf, 2008). Typically, this entails an integration of pedagogical tools and procedures which gradually allow learners to gain control over their learning and eventually develop their abilities in self-regulation. Meanwhile, the teacher gradually reduces the amount of scaffolding the learners can draw from in completing tasks (Monereo, 1995). Esteve (2007) notes that in order to develop self-regulation in learners not accustomed and not expecting to engage in reflection, these habits must be supported by the teacher. One way to foster such habits is with a learning cycle, whose main purpose is to provide a platform for reflective learning informed by the CEFR. The marriage of these two tools is key because "self-regulated learning can only be effective if you know roughly where you are –

[through] reasonably accurate self-assessment of strengths and weaknesses. This self-assessment will [also] be more accurate if learners are trained to reflect on their progress with the help of descriptors" (North, 2014, p. 110).

The CEFR provides the means by which to estimate ability, thus providing both the starting point of the learning cycle and a direction for future learning. The cycle itself then provides the method by which to train learners in habits that allow them to become more competent at regulating their own learning.

Self-Regulation Practices in Context

This section outlines both the institutional landscape in which the learners operate, the specific learning context of the writing class, and how the learning cycle, the CEFR and ELP are applied in mobilising learners with the tools and know-how for application in future learning contexts.

The general learning context

The practices introduced in this paper are from classes taken by English language majors in the School of Foreign Studies, Faculty of Language and Culture in Osaka University, Osaka, Japan. The achievement goals from the first to the fourth year for all twenty-five languages taught in this school are based on the common reference levels of the CEFR. For the English majors, the achievement goals for each skill for the end of the first, second, and fourth years correspond to the global scales of the CEFR for all five language skills (for listening, reading and writing, the general target is to progress to B2 in the first year, to C1 in the second year, and to C2 in the fourth year, and for spoken interaction and spoken production the general target is to progress to B2 in the second year, and to C1 in the fourth year). The learners have seven English classes in the first year (three classes focusing on spoken interaction and spoken production, and four reading- and writing-focused classes) and five in the second year (three classes focusing on spoken interaction, spoken production, and writing, and two reading and integrated skills classes).

Self-assessment as a departure point of the learning cycle

In their first year of study, learners engage in a number of practices all with the implicit and ultimate goal of encouraging learner self-regulation. These

include having the learners think about their aims and reflect on their strengths and weaknesses, reflect on and record the ways they learn best, and describe different learning approaches for different purposes. For instance, in a speaking-focused first year class, learners use an online self-assessment computer program three to four times a semester to self-assess their ability to perform the *can do* statements of the CEFR and the LP (see Smith, 2012 for an overview of this process). The *can do* statements for each skill are those from the *Goal-setting and Self-assessment checklists* (FLP SIG, 2009). As these checklists elaborate on each skill level of the CEFR, it is possible to observe minor improvements in learning. Through their first year classes, it is expected that the learners will become accustomed to engaging in self-assessment and working within the framework of the CEFR with the hope that learners are able to identify the starting point from which a learning cycle can commence (North, 2014). It is not until their second year that the learners are introduced to the learning cycle in the process writing class described below.

The specific learning context: A CEFR-informed process writing class

Process writing is an approach to essay writing that encourages writers to plan and revise, rearrange and delete text, re-read and produce multiple drafts before they produce their finished document (Stanley, 2003). The general goal of the writing class is for the students to progress to the point where they are able to write well-structured essays of around 1,000 words that "underline the relevant salient issues, expanding and supporting points of view at some length with subsidiary points, reasons and relevant examples, and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion" (COE, 2001, p. 61). The students themselves focus on a single B2 Writing *can do* statement (taken from the LP) for the entire academic year: *I can write an essay or report, which develops an argument, giving reasons to support or negate a point of view and weighing pros and cons*. Although the majority of learners are estimated to be around an upper B1 or lower B2 level at the outset of the class, in order to accommodate a range of learning competences, the B2 *can do* statement above is scaled, accommodating the two following *can do* statements from B1 and C1 respectively:

B1: I can write straightforward connected texts and simple essays on familiar subjects within my field, by linking a series of shorter or discrete elements into a linear sequence, and using dictionaries and reference resources.

C1: I can write clear, well-structured texts on complex subjects in my field, underlining the relevant salient issues, expanding and supporting points of view at some length with subsidiary points, reasons and relevant examples, and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.

The skills relevant to achieving these competences are addressed in sixty 90 minute classes over two semesters throughout which students produce six essays. The teacher uses tasks from a CEFR-informed process writing textbook for the first five essays (Zemack & Stafford-Yilmaz, 2008). The content of the first five essays and their associated *can do* statement are shown in Figure 2. The sixth essay is a free essay, in which the students make their own decisions about the type of essay and its content.

Essay Number and Type	Can do statement
1: Explanatory	I can write an essay highlighting the significance of people, events, experiences, etc., fully explaining the points I feel are important.
2: Problem-Solution	I can write an essay which outlines a problem and develops a solution, giving reasons to support my point of view.
3: Compare-Contrast	I can write an essay that compares and contrasts alternatives, fully explaining points of significance in a detailed and easily readable way.
4: Persuasive	I can write a persuasive essay which develops my arguments, counters likely opposing arguments and convinces the reader of my point of view.
5: Responding to a reading	I can write clear, well-structured responses to texts, underlining the salient issues, expanding and supporting my point of view, providing reasons and relevant examples, and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.

Figure 2. Contextualised *Can Do* Statements for Each Essay Assigned in the Process Writing Class

The learning cycle in practice: From reflection to self-assessment

Each learning cycle both starts and ends with reflection. After receiving teacher feedback following the completion of any essay, learners enter the reflection stage. In the reflection stage, learners discuss with their peers assessment criteria and feedback related to the essay they just completed, the relevant *can do* statements of that essay (Figure 2), a series of questions provided from the instructor (such as "*What have I done well? What could I improve?*") as well as reflective questions specific to the content of the previous essay. These

discussions lead to the creation of a list which will be used in the goal-setting stage of the upcoming essay. Typically, the list highlights the areas in which the learner feels they are doing well or need to improve. Added to this list are the *can do* statements for the upcoming essay (either from the LP writing checklist or the relevant chapter in the textbook).

The learners then enter the learning stage outline stage where the teacher introduces their task for the upcoming essay, adding any relevant items to the list. Subsequently, the learners enter the self-assessment stage of the learning cycle and self-assess on each of the list's items. Due to their self-assessment training in their first year of study, the learners generally appear to be comfortable and relatively accurate in performing this kind of a self-assessment. To summarise the steps so far, Figure 3 provides an example of how the learners progress from the completion of essay 3 to the commencement of essay 4.
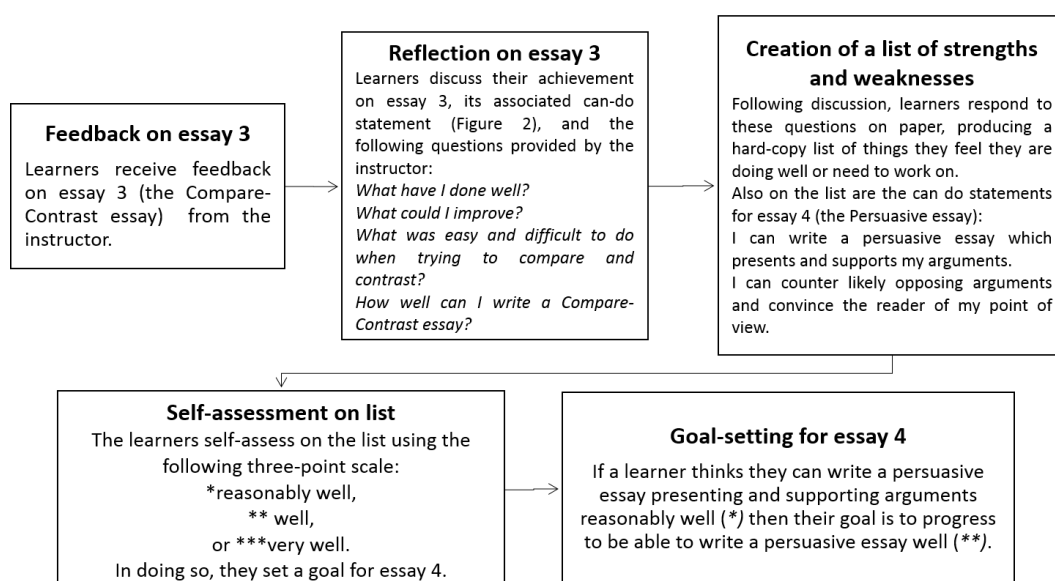
Figure 3. The Steps Taken by Learners from the Reflection Stage of Essay 3 to the Learning Stage of Essay 4

The learning cycle in practice: Goal-setting

As shown in Figure 3, the results of the self-assessment provide the starting point for the goal-setting. The teacher of this course uses a three point scale for self-assessment (although any scale seen to be appropriate could be employed). Essentially, the learner's goal is to progress one point up in the scale

for each item on the list during the writing of the next essay. In addition to the list created from reflection on the previous essay, the instructor also uses the '*My next language learning target*' sheet on page 10 of the LP (Appendix A) as the second part of the goal-setting. The instructor fills in some relevant information (e.g., what learning materials are needed and how the classes will generally proceed) and gives this to the learners, asking them to fill in the remainder of the sheet by setting clear and achievable goals for themselves. In order for learners to be able to monitor progress during the learning stage, they need to be able to refer to the relevant criteria provided by this sheet. Learners may additionally set their own criteria (marked by a ★ in Appendix A) based on strengths and weaknesses that emerged from reflection on any previous essay. In this way, both their goals and the assessment criteria under which they will produce the essay are individualised.

Following the goal-setting on an individual student basis, the final step in the goal-setting stage is to work with the class in developing an assessment rubric. The instructor poses the class oral questions regarding what elements they might expect to see in a persuasive or a problem-solution essay. These elements can relate to the structure, the style or the content of the essay. The class first discusses in groups, and then brainstorms together various ideas which are compiled in an assessment rubric (an example of which is shown in Appendix B) to be used for assessing what is produced in the learning stage. This rubric can be used for self-assessing the essay at any stage of the writing process, for peer assessment of drafts of the essay, plus teacher assessment of the final versions of the essay. It also provides additional guidelines that the learners should keep in mind throughout the writing process. Figure 4 shows examples of questions that might be asked by the instructor for essay 4 and the answers provided by learners.

Instructor questions for essay 4	Sample student responses
1. What are the elements of a good persuasive essay?	*The thesis statement is clear and easy to understand.*
2. How can I fully support the points of significance in a detailed and easily readable way?	*Use paragraphs for each point of significance.*
3. How can I convince the reader?	*Provide reasons for each argument.*

Figure 4. Questions Asked by the Instructor and Sample Student Responses for Inclusion on an Assessment Rubric

In general, these assessment practices follow the principles of learning-oriented assessment (LOA), which generally promote a positive classroom assessment culture (Carless, 2009). In a LOA view, students should actively engage with transparent assessment criteria (e.g., in the case of writing an essay, what makes an effective essay), and assessment quality (e.g., the quality of explanations and information provided in an essay).

The learning cycle in practice: The learning stage

The learning stage cycle typically spans about four classes per essay. Following the goal-setting, the teacher typically assigns learners with the homework task of developing a topic and some ideas on the topic to form the basis of the essay. For example, in the case of essay 4, the persuasive essay, this homework entails the learners selecting their overall argument and three main supportive arguments. The learners discuss their ideas with their peers, who provide critical and reflective feedback, possibly referring to the goal-setting documents. The next major homework assignment is for the learners to write their first draft, bringing a printed version of it to the following week's class, where a similar process is carried out. The learners first discuss their first drafts, get oral feedback from peers, read their peers' essays and provide oral or written feedback on the actual draft. The teacher then draws attention to specific aspects of the assessment criteria, or sections from the textbook for the learners to offer each other comments on. This occurs for a second and third draft before the learners submit their essays to the teacher for formal assessment and the process returns to the reflection stage leading into the fifth essay. It should also be noted that any feedback from the teacher should be timely and forward-looking so as to support current and future student learning: in other words, feedback should focus learners toward improvement in current and future learning tasks (Carless, 2009).

The final cycle and beyond

Towards the end of the course more control is expected from the learners. For the fifth essay of the year, the process differs slightly, with the variation beginning in the goal-setting stage. In the case of the fifth and sixth essays only, learners are not provided a *can do* statement, but are encouraged to complete a blank '*My next language learning target*' sheet (Appendix A). For the final

(sixth) essay, the students lead the process entirely on their own and are not provided with any resources, but are welcome to draw on resources they have been given throughout the year. They can formulate the goals in accordance with any *can do* statement from the textbook or the LP Writing checklist, and the type of essay they choose to write.

After the process writing class

At the end of the class, learners receive a handout which makes suggestions as to where and how they can implement the practices they have acquired more independently. Following minor instruction on this topic, the learners discuss integrating the learning cycle in their future learning contexts and how to bring their self-regulated practices forward. Following the process writing class, and the second academic year in general, the students are expected to be familiar with how to self-assess (from their first year training), and be armed with the general knowledge required for implementing a learning cycle in any learning context. The final essay of the second year is a good test for this, as they are expected to make all of the decisions in the production of their essay. This increase in control continues in their third year courses, culminating in Content Language and Integrated Learning (CLIL) classes, which typically involve individual study projects that incorporate English academic content. In these courses, since the focus is on more independent learning with less teacher guidance, the specific content of the self-assessment and formal assessment tools is adjusted continually and concurrently by both learners and instructors.

Discussion

The combination of cyclical learning (Figure 1), learning-oriented assessment (Carless, 2009) and classroom implementation of the CEFR can create pedagogical synergy, a positive classroom assessment culture, and may help learners act independently (O'Dwyer, Imig & Nagai, 2014). In the writing class described, although initially the teacher had the greatest responsibility in leading the learners through the learning cycles, more and more control was relinquished each time a subsequent cycle was undertaken. By the end of the course, the learners took full control of the essay writing process, selecting their topic,

creating their self-assessment lists, performing their own goal-setting and determining the assessment criteria for their essay. At the end of the course, materials for how these practices could be brought forward for different classes in the learners' third and fourth years of study were provided and then discussed. Providing resources that can apply to future learning at the end of a course represents one way to foster self-regulation.

Future research

While the pedagogical practices described herein are believed to allow learners to begin to operate autonomously, the authors admit that many assumptions are made about the learners' capabilities in engaging with the processes within each stage of the learning cycle. Basic comments from the learners about these processes (obtained via a student feedback survey) included that the "learning cycle can be used in any learning situation" and that the learners were happy to receive "direct feedback from classmates and the teacher that helps to improve my writing." Nonetheless, further research is certainly required to address whether the learners found self-assessment to be straight-forward and useful and were not just randomly selecting one of the options—well(*), reasonably well(**), or very well(***)—on the self-assessment tasks assigned to them by the teacher. Additionally, whether learners achieved the goals they set in the goal-setting stage, how they determined they had or had not achieved them, and the degree to which they benefited and learnt from reflection should also be examined. Furthermore, since class time was devoted to brainstorming an assessment rubric, investigation as to whether this brainstorming process, or the rubric itself, aided the writing process in the learning stage, or contributed to the achievement of goals would provide some insight on whether its usage was achieving the purpose for which it was intended. Finally, the learners' experience in navigating the learning cycle involved in the production of the final free essay and the extent to which the learning cycle is employed following the completion of the class would be worth investigating in order to provide some evidence for the degree to which self-regulation is internalised. At this point, there is no empirical evidence to support the extent to which self-regulation was fostered within each individual student. Overall, the functioning and efficacy of the CEFR-

informed learning cycle presented herein would benefit greatly from learner feedback at every stage of the cycle, at the conclusion of the course, and even following completion of the course or the degree programme.

Nonetheless, it is believed that placing the *can do* statements of the CEFR and ELP in the centre of self-regulation practices enables the CEFR's recognised benchmarks to be incorporated by the students into their future learning contexts. It is also thought that incorporating the CEFR and ELP into a learning cycle arms learners with sufficient knowledge and know-how for them to be capable of engaging in self-regulated learning behaviours, regardless of what teaching styles and programmes they encounter.

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Appendices

Appendix A My Next Language Learning Target

My next language learning target
Here you can write down your next learning target and record your progress in achieving it. When setting learning targets, you can use the goal setting and self-assessment checklists in the appendix to formulate your learning target.

Language: English
Learning Target学習目標 (Use the Self-assessment grid in the Language Passport and the checklists in the appendix to formulate your next language learning target as precisely as possible言語パスポートの自己評価表と付録のチェックリストを用いて、次の目標をできるだけ詳細に立てる) **October Writing goal:** I can write a persuasive essay which develops my arguments. 　｛***reasonably well → ** well**｝　｛**** well → ***very well**｝ I can counter likely opposing arguments and convince the reader of my point of view. 　｛***reasonably well → ** well**｝　｛**** well → ***very well**｝
How much time can I devote each day/week to achieving my target? 目標達成のために1日または1週間でどのくらいの時間を費やすことができるか？ **2 to (?　?) hours a week**

When shall I begin? いつから始めるか？ **October 3ʳᵈ**	When do I plan to finish? いつ終えるか？ **Early November**

How do I intend to achieve my target? 目標達成をどのようにめざすか？ For example, can I work alone or do I need to work with other people? 例えば、一人で学習するのか、他の人と一緒に学習するのか？ **Complete Chapter 4 activities: - Brainstorm and discuss about a controversial, topical theme.** Write a persuasive essay which presents and supports my arguments. The essay will need to counter likely opposing arguments and convince the reader of my point of view. **My own criteria:**
What learning materials do I need? どのような教材が必要か？ **Writers at work Textbook, Language Portfolio & ---**
How shall I know whether or not I have achieved my target? 目標に到達したか、あるいはしなかったかをどのように知るか？(For example, can I take a test or set and correct a test myself? Or shall I need to ask my teacher, another learner, or a native speaker to assess me? Or can I depend entirely on my own judgement?　例えば、テストを受けるのか、自分でテストを作って解答するのか？先生に聞くのか、他の学習者やネイティブに評価をしてもらうのか？完全に自分の判断に任せるのか？) **Refer to self-peer-teacher assessment of the essay both in the first, second and final drafts of the essay. I should be able to provide convincing arguments which are not easily dismissed.**

★**My own criteria:**

Review of learning progress on or near my target date学習経過や直近の目標日程の振り返り
Have I achieved my target? In working toward my target have I learnt anything new about (i) the target language (ii) language learning? What am I going to do with what I have learned? 目標を達成したか？目標に向かう中で(i)目指す言語、(ii)言語学習について新しいことを学んだか？これまで学んだことを今後どういかすのか？

Appendix B Feedback Form

Persuasive Essay Feedback

A. Topic and introduction

The topic is easy to understand, familiar, engaging, and controversial

There is a unique and engaging hook.   The background is sufficient.

The thesis statement contains a strong opinion about the topic with a course of action suggested

1 2 3 4 5

B. Main body paragraphs: Arguments

Each body paragraph has one clear argument which is fully developed with sufficient information.

These main arguments are well organised and are supported appropriately and thoroughly.

The support is appealing and effective; it comes from actual experience and/or relevant research. Statistics are used appropriately.

1 2 3 4 5

C. Main body paragraphs: convincing?

The arguments are clear, strong, logical, and explained in detail.

Likely counterarguments are accounted for effectively.

The main arguments convince the reader to the writer's point of view.

1 2 3 4 5

D. Conclusion/Overall

The conclusion summarizes the arguments and finishes with a powerful concluding statement

Various types of support are used appropriately; transitions and modals are used where necessary.

In general the essay is balanced and well constructed.

1 2 3 4 5

Total: /20

E. You can write a persuasive essay which develops your arguments fully.

*reasonably well,** well, *very well

You can counter likely opposing arguments and convince the reader of your point

---

of view.

*reasonably well,** well, ***very well

F. General and other comments and advice:

Formative Assessment in University English Conversation Classes

Carla Wilson, Hiroshima, Japan

Abstract

This is an account of one teacher's use of formative assessment in Japanese university EFL conversation classes. Formative assessment was used in these classes in the ways advocated by Clarke (2013) for use in UK primary schools; that is, through the use of decontextualised learning objectives, success criteria for meeting the objectives, student examples, talk partners, and self- and peer-assessment. The ways in which these tools of formative assessment were used and the benefits they brought to the classes are discussed.

Keywords: formative assessment, EFL, learning objectives, self-assessment, self-regulated learning

This paper describes my attempts to bring aspects of formative assessment currently being used as part of Assessment For Learning (AFL) in UK primary schools (see Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008) into university conversation classes in Japan. Formative assessment does not have a universally accepted definition, but it can be thought of as any assessment which is used to change the way that teaching or learning occurs. There is no particular method of assessment that is formative. A test used to assess achievement for the purposes of grading, reporting results to parents, or comparing schools would be considered summative assessment. However, if used to find out what students know and the areas where more help is needed, thereby informing future lessons, the same test would be an example of formative assessment. Moreover, formative assessment does not have to be in the form of a test. Teachers constantly assess their students in various ways such as through pieces of written work, participation in regular class activities, and homework. All of these methods can be used as ways of informing what teaching and learning needs to take place.

It has been argued that assessment can only be really classed as formative when it is used by students themselves to inform learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Hall & Burke, 2003). Similarly Clarke (2008) identifies self-assessment as crucial for formative assessment to be effective. When formative assessment is defined in this narrower way, where assessment is something done and used by students themselves, it can be viewed as a classroom application of self-regulated learning (SRL). Paris and Paris (2001) identify self-assessment as one of three main areas of direct classroom application of SRL, which is "the self-directive process by which learners transform their mental abilities into academic skills" (Zimmerman, 2002, p. 65). While SRL is a construct that may

encompass a person's whole learning behaviour, formative assessment is a strategy that can be used in the classroom for a particular learning objective that will help learners develop as self-regulated learners. Formative assessment involves using self-assessment to help learners see gaps between their current level and desired level, and provides ways of bridging these gaps. Clarke (2008) identifies five tools as necessary for effective formative assessment: pure learning objectives, success criteria, student examples, talk partners, and self- and peer-assessment. Her work is based on the findings of several action research teams made up of groups of teachers in UK and US primary schools. My attempt to use formative assessment in university conversation classes in Japan is based upon Clarke's five tools. The forthcoming sections will introduce each tool and describe how it has been operationalized in my classes.

Pure Learning Objectives

A pure learning objective is one that has been separated from the context of the learning goal. For example, "using topic sentences correctly" is a pure learning objective while "writing a topic sentence for a paragraph that compares two cities" has the context embedded in it. In conversation classes and textbooks designed for speaking, there are different types of learning objectives that a lesson might have. For example, we might have a topic-based learning objective such as "to be able to talk about daily routines", a grammar-based learning objective such as "to be able to use the simple present tense correctly", or a function-based learning objective such as "to be able to place an order in a restaurant". A de-emphasis on grammar in many EFL classrooms in recent years has made topic-based or function-based learning objectives more likely.

Topic-based objectives such as "to be able to talk about daily routines" have the context as part of the objective. When the class moves on to another topic, such as family or shopping, although the teacher may see connections between the last learning objective and the next, it is less likely that the students will. They feel as if they are starting from scratch. This is likely to be the case with function-based objectives as well. If we use pure learning objectives, however, the students can see how these are transferable to different contexts (i.e. different topics or different situations. The skills necessary for holding conversations in English can be decontextualised relatively easily.

Learning objectives related to conversation skills, such as providing extra information in answers, asking follow-up questions, and being able to continue a conversation even when we are not asked a question are pure learning objectives that can be transferred to conversations on any topic. If teachers set these kinds of skills as learning objectives for a course, and make sure students are aware of this, students can see how what they are learning is easily transferable to any conversational context. In one conversation course I teach, each class has a specific skill learning

objective and a topic. As an example, the first class has a learning objective of "giving extra information in answers" and the topic is "hometown or neighborhood". In subsequent lessons with different topics, the "giving extra information in answers" learning objective is referred back to and used with the new topic. In this way students see that each skill is relevant to all topics and they begin to use the skills with increasing frequency. I typically choose learning objectives based on the conversation skills that I feel many students are lacking.

When students understand very clearly what the learning objective is, and what is necessary to meet this objective, they are more able to take control of their own learning. It can be extremely demotivating for students to not know what is expected of them. In Japan, going from high school English classes to a university conversation class with a native English speaker can be quite a change, and many students may feel at a loss as to what is expected of them. Topic-based learning objectives such as "to be able to talk about my family" may not really help them in this respect. Decontextualised skill-based learning objectives can help a lot more, especially once broken down into success criteria.

Success Criteria

Success criteria are the details of the learning objectives. They break the learning objective down into smaller parts, telling students exactly what they need to do to meet the objective, and helping students see where they need to improve. For example, for the learning objective "giving extra information in answers" the success criteria might be:

    1. Give a basic answer plus two extra pieces of information.

    2. Don't repeat the words from the question in your answer.

Success criteria can be given by the teacher at the beginning of the lesson or generated by students by having them look at examples of answers that meet or do not meet the learning objective and thinking about why they do or do not meet the objective. Understanding the success criteria seems to really help students understand how they can improve their conversation skills. Very quickly students go from answers reminiscent of junior high school English textbooks, which often have grammatically correct but simple and repetitive exchanges, to answers that seem more natural and are more likely to keep a conversation going. For example, prior to defining success criteria, a typical answer to the question, "Have you ever been overseas?" may be: "No I haven't. I have never been overseas." However, after considering the success criteria, students become able to make responses such as: "No, but I'd like to go to Italy and France. I love pasta and I want to see the Eiffel Tower."

Ideally, success criteria should be generated by students themselves. This gives students

more ownership of the criteria rather than the criteria being something imposed by the teacher. In an English Communication class I teach, students were instructed to generate success criteria for the very general learning objective of having a conversation in English. I asked them to consider in pairs or small groups what is important in conversation. They came up with criteria such as: "talk a lot", "smile", "listen carefully", "use only English", and "have eye contact". The activity of making a student-generated list of success criteria also enabled me to deal with some misconceptions among students about conversation skills, such as needing continuous eye contact. Once the class list of success criteria had been generated, students could then use it to evaluate themselves and their peers after each conversation they had. From this self- and peer-assessment, students can see where their strengths and weaknesses lie and then work on improving their weak areas.

Using Student Examples

Being able to see examples of good conversation skills can help students understand what is required of them, and help them to generate their own success criteria. An actual student conversation, rather than one from a textbook, can be effective as students see it is a realistic goal to which they can aspire. Transcribed, anonymous conversations can be used if these are available from another class of a similar level. It is effective to have both a high quality example and a less high quality example which the students can compare in order to see why one is better. The difference in quality needs to be clear and should be related to the learning objective. For example, for the "give extra information in answers" objective, one example should have lots of answers with extra information while the other lots of short, basic answers. If the examples are different in terms of grammatical accuracy, students may focus on this rather than the skill the teacher wants them to practise. Although I haven't yet tried this myself, video or audio recordings of conversations would probably be even more effective but cannot be made anonymous. A way around this would be to film two willing student volunteers at the beginning of the course and again at the end. This video could be shown to future classes at the beginning of their course. Seeing examples of good skills and poor skills can help students really understand what is expected of them, and show them where they need to improve. Through seeing that other students have managed it, it also helps them see that what is expected is an achievable goal.

Talk Partners

Most teachers probably already use a lot of pair work in conversation classes for maximising English speaking practice. Another way of using talk partners, however, is perhaps less common. Talk partners can be used very effectively as a replacement for a hands up approach (where students

raise their hand to answer a question). The problem with asking students to raise their hands is that it tends to be the same few students who do not mind being the centre of attention and are relatively confident in their English ability. This means that the teacher has no idea whether the rest of the class understand, and therefore does not know whether further explanation or practice is needed. It also means that some students may not really think about the question, instead passively waiting until the teacher or another student tells them the answer. Calling on students by name is one way to encourage quieter students to become more involved in class. However, students who have had bad experiences of being asked to answer questions in front of the whole class may feel uncomfortable and it could take time for them to overcome this. The use of talk partners provides a relatively non-threatening environment that allows all students to get involved.

Asking a question and having students answer or discuss it with their partner (using the L1 where necessary) means that all students have to think about the answer rather than wait to be told it by the teacher or another student. Also, the teacher and the students themselves can get a better idea of what all students in the class know. After a given amount of time, if appropriate, the teacher can call on two or three pairs to share their ideas with the class (again using the L1 if necessary). Even if the teacher cannot speak the L1, they can get a good idea of how much the students know by the level of noise and confidence in their discussion. When sharing ideas, pairs can say their ideas in the L1 and the class can help translate into the L2 for the teacher. I have found using talk partners in this way is good for various situations including:

1. Brainstorming vocabulary or questions for a given topic;
2. Discussing (in the L1) whether certain sentences are correct or appropriate;
3. Discussing (in the L1) aspects of learning such as self-evaluation or success criteria.

Self- and Peer-Assessment

The hallmark of formative assessment, as mentioned above, is that it is used to inform subsequent teaching and learning, in particular by students themselves. The most effective formative assessment makes use of the students' own assessment during the actual writing of an assignment or the practising of a skill, rather than afterwards (Clarke, 2008). Students can evaluate themselves and their peers using the success criteria. I have found that many students are uncomfortable pointing out another student's weak points even after seeming to understand they are helping their classmates by doing so. After trying out a 1 to 5 score system, a ranking system, and a circle-triangle-cross system (where a circle means something has been done well, a triangle means there is room for improvement, and a cross means something has not been done well) I have settled on a ranking system. Students rank the success criteria according to how well they have been

achieved, both for themselves and for their partner. This avoids the problem of students not having to give a low score or a cross to their partner. Once students have identified their weak areas through ranking how well the success criteria have been achieved, they can try to improve these areas in subsequent conversations.

Students may need strategies to help them improve a given area. The teacher's role here is important as students may not know how to go about improving their weak points and may use inappropriate strategies. For example, several of my students felt they were using too much Japanese during conversation time. A common suggestion for a way to improve this area was to memorise lists of English words so that their vocabulary increases and they have less need for Japanese. Clearly this is, at best, a very long-term strategy and is likely to become an extremely inefficient use of their time if indeed they continue to do it at all. I suggested, instead, that they keep on hand a pen and a piece of paper during conversation time and keep track of how many times they use Japanese. Documenting their use of Japanese in numerical terms helps them to focus on reducing the tendency little by little, which is a more achievable goal. They can also keep track of what Japanese they used, and then find out how to say those words or expressions in English later. Helping students find strategies to address their weak areas, and ensuring they use these strategies in subsequent lessons, is perhaps the most important job of the teacher in classes using formative assessment in this way. It has also been the biggest challenge for me personally. Students have needed a lot of reminding and encouraging, which isn't surprising, perhaps, as they have probably never had to do anything like this in their educational experiences so far.

One tool that has been something of a breakthrough in my classes with self-assessment is using a voice recording application that I had students download onto their smartphones. They can record a conversation with their partner, and then transcribe and analyse it. When they see their conversation written down, it seems much easier for them to analyse it for weak areas. For example they can count how many answers they gave with and without extra information. As they get used to listening to their recorded conversations, or when they are practising a skill that is not new, they can listen without transcribing. Recording makes it much easier for students to notice the things they had trouble saying in English, which makes it easier for them to look up these language points later.

Conclusion

In summary, using decontextualised learning objectives helps students see that what they have learned is transferable to other contexts and understand what is expected of them in a conversation class. Using success criteria helps students to meet the learning objectives and identify their weak

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Researching Self-regulated Learning and Foreign Language Learning

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Abstract

Self-regulation of learning is a topic of increasing interest for foreign or second language educators. Understanding how we can help our learners develop the strategies and capabilities that contribute to self-regulated learning (SRL) requires a firm grounding in existing research and theory, and a commitment to researching and testing potential methods within the situational contexts of the learning environment. Ensuring valid, replicable research results requires attention to a number of important factors in research design and implementation. This article provides an overview of some key issues of concern for research, ideally serving as a starting point or guide for those interested in expanding our knowledge of best practices for enhancing SRL in the language learning classroom.

Keywords: methodology, self-regulated learning, research practice, teacher education, learner development

Self-regulated learning (SRL) has been an important area of research in the fields of education and psychology over the last few decades, but is still a relative newcomer to the foreign language learning (FLL) sphere. As this special issue shows, a diverse range of research is attempting to uncover how SRL can help our learners develop as language learners, both in traditional classroom-based and independent learning environments. However, there are a number of critical issues that should be considered when approaching research in this field to ensure the research leads to theoretically valid, replicable outcomes. In this respect, cross-disciplinary understanding can play a crucial role in helping to advance the state of SRL in relation to FLL, and I believe it is instructional to look at psychological and educational research to gain perspectives on suitable practices for research. Another source for guidance on developing theory related to SRL is within the FLL field itself. Looking to more well established areas that share facets of inquiry, such as autonomy and self-directed learning in language education or the field of language-learner strategy research should also help clarify best practices for SRL research.

With this in mind, in this paper I will outline what I believe are some of the main concerns that need to be considered when researching SRL and FLL. The discussion will touch on definitional issues related to self-regulation and SRL, matters of context, and debate regarding appropriate measurement. I will also look at one particular case within the area of language learning research that exemplifies some of the challenges involved in researching SRL. Finally, some suggestions for research approaches based on contemporary research into areas of language acquisition will be presented. However, before leading into discussion of definitional issues, it is perhaps useful to put forward a general definition of what I understand self-regulated learning, and

the related concert of self-regulation, to be. While these definitions are not necessary for an understanding of the following, they may help clarify some of the points raised. Self-regulation refers to the capability of people to recognise and respond to context-situated behavioural, cognitive, or metacognitive cues, ideally modifying aspects of their functioning in the particular context to meet the needs signalled by these cues. Self-regulated learning refers to this process within academic settings, and is seen to be a learner capability that underlies and contributes, in either positive or negative ways, to learning outcomes.

Definitional Matters

In a broad overview of some of the issues facing research into self-regulation published at the turn of the millennium, Zeidner, Boekaerts, and Pintrich (2000) called for the need for definitional clarity. They pointed out that a number of accounts of self-regulation shared a certain conceptual fuzziness, leaving unclear how self-regulation differed from other concepts such as regulation, self-management, problem-solving, or metacognition. They attributed this ambiguity to the overly-specialised and idiosyncratic use of definitional terms which has arisen from the development of modern behavioural science into somewhat compartmentalised sub-disciplines, and stated that "consistent nomenclature and taxonomy have been virtually impossible for many years because little coherence exists among theory and measures of self-regulation and other cognitive constructs" (Zeidner et al., 2000, p. 753). Five years later, Boekaerts and Corno were to write: "Over the past two decades, researchers have struggled with the conceptualisation and operationalisation of self-regulatory capacity, coming to the conclusion that there is no simple and straightforward definition of the construct of SR. The system of self-regulation comprises a complex, superordinate set of functions…located at the junction of several fields of psychological research" (2005, p. 200). Illustrating this is, for example, a special edition of the *Educational Psychology Review* devoted to delineating the concepts of metacognition, self-regulation, and self-regulated learning (Alexander, 2008). Here, Dinsmore, Alexander, and Laughlin (2008) reviewed 255 studies from 2003 to 2007 within the field of educational psychology that dealt with one (or more) of these concepts. They point out that although there is a "conceptual core binding the three constructs" (p. 404) they are not synonymous. Broadly speaking, theories of self-regulation focus on the important role of the environment in triggering regulation; metacognition focuses on the mind (cognition) of the individual, while self-regulated learning is concerned with academic learning (Dinsmore et al., 2008; Lajoie, 2008). However, reinforcing Boekaerts and Corno's (2005) observation noted above, the findings reported by Dinsmore et al. (2008) showed a lack of clear definition and considerable overlap amongst these three concepts. Other findings show a lack of

explicit definitions of SRL in reports of empirical research (Hadwin, Järvelä, & Miller, 2011), suggesting an assumption that those interested in the research will know what SRL is without it needing to be defined. Obviously this is not a desirable situation as this kind of conceptual laxness can cause confusion when trying to understand research results (Lajoie, 2008,) as well as contribute to inconsistencies in the results (Schunk, 2008).

Given this issue of definitional clarity, it is perhaps not surprising that a number of models of SRL have been postulated, each reflecting a differing theoretical stance, and each of which present slightly different processes or stages learners pass through when engaging in learning tasks. Most contemporary accounts have three to four different stages or processes which self-regulated learners are posited to work through (see Zimmerman and Schunk (2001) for a comprehensive outline of various models). However, Zeidner et al. (2000) point out that models of SRL may require increased complexity to incorporate the dynamic nature of self-regulation. A further concern they raise regards the role of associated constructs such as self-efficacy and affect, and how they are related to self-regulation and SRL. We could extend this to ask the same of such constructs as beliefs, agency, interest, and imagination, all of which have recently been discussed in relation to second or foreign language acquisition (see, for example, Murray, 2014b; Navarro & Thornton, 2011), and all of which I believe are important factors in contributing to self-regulation. Self-regulation and SRL are not clean, clearly defined concepts. Approaches to understanding the complexity of both may not be successful if the focus of research is too broad, or alternatively, too narrow. As contributions to this issue have shown, it would also appear necessary to clarify the differences and points of convergence between self-regulation and constructs such as autonomy (Murray, 2014b; Nakata, 2014) or self-directed learning. Recognising how these are related, and the differences and similarities between constructs should serve to clarify research agendas as well as making the what and how of the research process more transparent.

The Place of Context

One reoccurring criticism that has been directed at SRL research has been a tendency to ignore the learning context and focus more on the individual or the self. While at first glance this may not seem to be a problem, given that SRL involves regulation of the *self*, the problem is that much research often fails to account for the possibility of co-regulation or other-regulation of learning, or for the effects on the learner of the learning environment. Martin (2003) states "much psychological research on self and agency has suffered from a failure to recognise the extent to which these important psychological phenomena are constituted within historical, sociocultural traditions of human life" (p. 36). Similarly, there has been a tendency for researchers to focus

heavily on cognitive and behavioural aspects of self-regulation, treating social and affective dimensions as a background context rather than part of the process itself (Greeno, 1998). Martin and McLellan (2008) argue that many researchers studying self-regulation engage in psychologism, assuming (perhaps tacitly) that choices and actions of agents can be explained by reference to inner processes and states, underplaying the role of societal influences or interactivity with others. This is problematic in that it basically becomes tautological to discuss self-regulation, as regulation is seen to be located only within the self. Additionally, such issues as control over learning or regulation of learning through external sources are effectively removed from the research agenda, reinforcing and perpetuating the decontextualisation of self-regulation.

It has been suggested that what is required are research approaches that measure SRL as context-dependant activity (Turner, 2006), and that research into self-regulated learning would benefit by taking into account the learner's sociocultural environment (McInerney & Van Etten, 2004). Of course, most models of SRL include a social dimension, but there is still a need to clarify the differences between self-regulation, co-regulation, and socially shared regulation (Hadwin et al., 2011). Recent discussion suggests a refocusing of conceptual understanding in terms of the context of study to better account for the social, dynamic nature of the learning environment; for example Perry and Rahim (2011) cast a critical eye on the tendency of researchers to separate the learner and context, and outline how more research should be carried out in the classroom, giving greater attention to the perspectives of both the learners and the teachers.

Consideration of context can happen at a number of levels. On one level, self-regulation is likely to vary for individual learners across academic domains, or across the same domain in differing classroom contexts (Wigfield, Klauda, & Cambria, 2011) so understanding the processes involved here is seen as one part of the research agenda. A broader level is in relation to culture, as in the cross-border sense. Much of the research into SRL comes from a western (predominately North American) context; to what extent are the findings from this research transferrable to other cultures? This is usually not addressed in studies into SRL in differing cultural contexts. While there does seem to be empirical support for viewing self-regulation of learning as an etic (universal) construct (McInerney, 2008), often the assumption seems to be that theoretical or research findings can be imported into different cultural contexts without major concerns for potential differences, i.e., without researching the possible emic (or cultural-specific) dimensions within the cultural context under study (McInerney, 2008; 2011). Further complicating matters is the nature of the research tools often used in studying SRL; McInerney (2011) argues that the reliability and validity of scales or inventories used in measuring self-regulation is compromised when they are adapted for use in studies outside of the cultural setting in which they were developed without additional validity or reliability checks for the new cultural setting.

The point then, is that research into self-regulation needs to give increased consideration to the role of the sociocultural context of the learning situation. Furthermore, researchers need to be cognisant of the (inter- and intra-) cultural borders they are crossing and how this relates to the theoretical background of the research.

This is reflected in recent discussion on other areas of language learning research. Witness recent volumes devoted to reconceptualising the place of the individual in applied linguistic (Benson & Cooker, 2013), considering the role of the self and second language acquisition (Mercer & Williams, 2014), and social dimensions of autonomy (Murray, 2014a), all of which offer insights that are applicable to researching SRL in the foreign language classroom.

Measuring SRL

Along with changing conceptions of what self-regulation and its application by learners may entail, and where in the sociocultural milieu it is situated, a long-running debate relates to how it should be measured. This particular discussion revolves around whether self-regulation should be considered to be an aptitude or an event. When conceived as an aptitude, self regulation is seen as something relatively fixed and stable in the learner, developing over time and displaying considerable individual differences. As an event, it is seen as something that is more situationally determined, arising in response to particular demands of a learning task. One view advanced is that both qualities of SRL should be measured (Winne & Perry, 2000; Zeidner et al., 2000), i.e., it should be regarded as both an aptitude and an event, and that methods need to be developed for measuring SRL as both. However, a criticism of this suggestion brings up the issue of whether or not the models and solutions being suggested in this case are appropriate. Without knowing exactly what SRL entails (i.e., whether it is an aptitude or an event) it would seem somewhat premature to attempt to study it without the necessary conceptual understanding of what is being studied: "If the meaning of a particular concept, in this case self-regulation, is not clear, what is needed is not empirical research, but a clarification of the concept's rules of correct employment" (Martin & McLellan, 2008, p. 439). It may sound like a facile point, but if self-regulation is to be researched, one needs to have a clear conceptual understanding about what is being researched, which brings us back to the need for definitional clarity.

Assuming the researcher has developed a clear conceptual picture of what he or she understands SRL to be, differing measurement techniques are necessary depending on what exactly is being measured—an aptitude, or an event (Winne & Perry, 2000). If conceptualised as an aptitude, self-report methods of measurement often tend to be used; these include questionnaires, interviews, or teacher judgements. To measure as an event involves looking at learning in progress,

through such methods as think-aloud measures, error-detection tasks, trace methodologies, and learner observation. Winne and Perry (2000), at the time of their assessment argued too little attention had been given to SRL as an event, something that may not have changed so much based on more recent overviews of research (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011). Perhaps because of lower methodological hurdles, researchers have tended to measure SRL as an aptitude; but the results that have arisen out of this kind of research are questionable. Dinsmore et al. (2008) found that much of the research in their review utilised "self-report and Likert-type instruments [with] insufficient corroboration or collaboration of what individuals report they are thinking or doing with actual traces of such thoughts or behaviours" (pp. 405-406).

One problem is the reliability of learner self-reports used in attribute-focused analysis: "Necessary as self-report data are, they are insufficient for research on SR and for helping learners develop more productive SRL" (Winne, 2005, p. 236). A similar argument is that researchers need to apply dynamic concepts and models to the area of SRL, using more sophisticated analytic techniques than those commonly deployed in previous research (Zeidner et al., 2000). Triangulation or mixed-method studies such as those covered by Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) should be implemented, and longitudinal studies are especially needed (Zeidner et al., 2000). Boekaerts and Corno (2005) outline eight different assessment measures in their comprehensive discussion on SRL. Other than self-report questionnaires these include: behavioural observations; interviews; think aloud protocols; examining trace evidence; situational manipulations; recording of strategies "on-task"; and learner diaries. Obviously, each has its strengths and weaknesses, but with careful design and a mixture of techniques, these assessment measures seem to offer a way forward in successfully measuring different aspects of SRL.

Overall, it seems that at least in the psychology and educational fields, "researchers have come to realise that the ultimate goal of comprehensive, insightful models of SRL depends upon a study of self-regulation *while it is being generated*" (Boekarts & Corno, 2005, p. 208, emphasis in original). Measurement needs to be focused on activity and participation of both learners and teachers in the actual learning environments (Perry & Rahim, 2011), using real-time event measures to avoid weaknesses of out-of-context (post-event self-reports, etc) measurements (Zimmerman, 2011).

I think it is important to bring up one final consideration here, however. Measuring SRL as an event presupposes that learners have the capacity to self-regulate, but if they have not yet developed this capability within the learning context under study, devoting time and resources to trying to measure a non-existent event would seem somewhat counterproductive. Might it be better to use aptitude-based measurements to ensure learners have developed SRL capability before moving on to look at evidence of its actual application? I would argue this may be the case, and that

there is a need to develop strong measurement tools and techniques to complement or replace the standard approaches that have been used in aptitude-based studies.

SRL, FLL, and Strategic Learning

Some of the most prominent discourse related to SRL in second/foreign language learning originates via Zoltán Dörnyei and colleagues' critique of research into strategic language learning, and I believe this exemplifies a number of the issues covered in the preceding sections. This particular case revolves around the introduction of a model based on self-regulation which is intended to help overcome some of the problems that have plagued strategic learning research (Dörnyei, 2005; Tseng, Dörnyei, & Schmitt, 2006). Arguments for increased conceptual clarity arising from the psychological sciences notwithstanding, Dörnyei (2005) suggests that adopting the concept of self-regulation in place of learning strategies is helpful in overcoming issues of definitional clarity that have been problematic for learning strategy research. Tseng, et al. (2006) developed a scale they feel measures self-regulatory capacity, presenting this as an alternative to measures of strategic learning capacities. This particular scale, SRCvoc (Self-Regulating Capacity in Vocabulary learning scale) is theorised to measure self-regulation as a trait (or an aptitude, using the nomenclature introduced above). It is psychometrically based; a questionnaire designed to serve as a diagnostic tool to identify and understand learners' strengths and weaknesses in terms of five dimensions of self-regulation in the areas of (English vocabulary) learning. (Tseng, et al., 2006). They make the important caveat that the scale is intended as a starting point for understanding learner self-reflection, and should be combined with qualitative methods. Their initial development and testing of this scale has since been validated in a Japanese EFL setting by Mizumoto and Takeuchi (2011).

However, some controversy surrounds this particular development, not surprisingly from scholars interested in strategy research. Gao (2007) in response to Tseng, et al. brings up the previously mentioned issue of conceptual definitions, pointing out that metacognitive knowledge "could be a competing concept for the term 'self-regulatory capacity'" (p. 617). Rose (2012) outlines how "definitional fuzziness" has been a problem for much of the research into language learning strategies, and notes that the model theorised by Tseng, et al. to replace strategic learning models is itself "suffering from the same definitional fuzziness" (p. 96) as the models it is aiming to replace.

Another point, put forward by Ranalli (2012) argues that too much focus on Dörnyei and colleagues' reconceptualisation has perhaps drawn the focus away from broader areas of self-regulation and other streams of related research found in the second/foreign language learning

domain. Perhaps of more concern is Ranalli's (2012) discussion of SRCvoc, and in particular the issue of the models of SRL used. Ranalli showed that empirical evidence from a study of self-regulated strategy use based on Winne and Hadwin's COPES model of SRL (Winne, 2001) which conceptualises self-regulation as an event, provided substantially different results to account for student learning gains than Tseng, et al.'s (2006) trait (or aptitude)-based account.

What to make of this particular situation? Tseng, et al.'s scale measures self-regulation as an aptitude or trait; it does not measure strategy use as an event in action (Rose, 2012). So it is only a first step towards understanding self-regulation, and in that it is attempting to create a new context-specific scale to measure self-regulation, perhaps a useful step. However, I also believe this particular case shows how the issue of definitional clarity needs to be treated carefully when attempting to link SRL and FLL, especially considering the substantial body of research surrounding other areas that SRL shares commonalities with. And of course, as I think Ranalli (2012) shows, there is also a need to be aware of alternative models and theoretical discussions to help guide research decisions.

Drawing from Within

Within the language-learning field, self-regulated learning shares similarities with other concepts such as self-directed learning, metacognition, strategic learning, and learner autonomy, all of which provide a rich source of research models and practice providing useful guidance and suggestions on appropriate research directions when studying SRL.

Oxford (2011) devotes considerable space to research with her Strategic Self-Regulation (S2R) model of language learning. In summarising the kinds of research that has been popular for those studying learning strategies, self-report is identified as a technique often used to uncover learners' mental processes. The use of trace measures is also a common measurement technique, but something that needs to be complemented with interviews or some other form of assessment. Think aloud protocols (TAPs) are often presented as a useful method to assess how learners are using strategies or regulating their learning in real time. TAPs, or concurrent verbal reporting, involves having students verbalise their thinking as they progress through a learning task, with a delay of no more than 5-10 seconds, and are believed to provide a better record of how learners monitor and regulate their learning than post-event self-report measures (Greene, Robertson, & Croker Costa, 2011). Oxford (2011) points out the need to teach the learners how to actually use these kinds of protocols, with a standard technique involving modelling by the teacher/researcher. Of course, this raises the issue that when the learners actually use the modelling technique they may simply mirror what they learnt; one way to avoid this is to ensure the modelling session does not

use the materials students will be working with in the classroom or research session. Pre- and post-task verbal reporting is another option for assessing SRL, where the subjects report what they plan to do before a task, and then retrospectively look back of the utility of the strategies they employed.

Looking specifically at researching autonomy, Benson (2011) suggests action research is most suited for this particular field, something applicable to SRL, too. Useful approaches he suggests include introspective or retrospective accounts of learning gathered through diaries, written language learning histories, or interviews. In terms of looking at SRL as a state (event) it is useful to adopt a process-based analysis, one possible approach to this is "through observations involving video-recording and transcription of learning events, but diaries, interviews and stimulated recall can also be useful techniques" (Benson, 2011, p. 207).

Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008) introduce a number of methodologies suitable for studying language development as complex dynamic systems; if we can assume that SRL is itself a dynamic system then perhaps these methods could also be applied to the study of SRL.

Student self-assessment in the form of portfolios is both a useful way to measure SRL progress, as well as to encourage successful development & implementation, as demonstrated by an early study of self-regulation and language development by Donato and McCormick (1994). What is crucial for this kind of approach is active feedback and reflection on the portfolio contents from both teachers and learners. Their research was informed by a sociocultural perspective, and in fact perhaps some of the most promising research directly related to SRL and second or foreign language learning comes from researchers adopting a sociocultural framework. This is especially so as the focus shifts more towards the co-regulation or other-regulation of the self in SRL. A case in point is Bown and White (2010), who demonstrate how qualitative methods can be used in measuring particular dimensions of control in self-regulation; in this case, the regulation of affect, an important if little-studied part of self-regulation. They used a small sample size of just three subjects, relying on interviews for their data collection. While they acknowledge limitations of their approach, they see a process-based approach as most appropriate for understanding this particular facet of the learner.

Finally, an analysis of self-directed learning (SDL) by Pemberton & Cooker (2012) is of particular interest as a case study of an alternative research methodology applicable to varied research contexts; Q methodology. This is a research tool which avoids fundamental weaknesses of standard psychometric approaches (Stainton Rogers, 1995) yet one which helps researchers to empirically identify factors contributing to learner processes, from a shared or holistic perspective, or from the individual's perspective: "Q enables the researcher to harness subjective notions in a methodical way, embracing both the rigour of statistical analysis and the richness of verbal data" (Pemberton & Cooker, 2012, p. 215). The authors note that, to their knowledge there have been no

other published cases of applied linguistics research using Q methodology; certainly as far as this author is aware, nothing in relation to FLL and SRL. One hopes that this particular case does not become an anomaly.

Closing Comments

Self-regulated learning is still a relatively under-researched area in relation to foreign language learning, but it offers a complex, broad range of research possibilities. As a learner capability that underlies and contributes, in either positive or negative ways, to learning outcomes, and which seems to vary considerably across learners and learning contexts, the challenges involved in advancing understanding of SRL processes are quite considerable. But at the same time, these challenges are what will ideally help make this a vibrant area of research in the near future. While the points raised in this paper are somewhat board, and not necessarily restricted to the study of SRL, it is hoped they will provide some guidance for those interested in exploring this concept, and contributing to a clearer understanding of the relationship between self-regulated learning and successful outcomes in foreign language learning.

Notes on the contributor

Paul Collett has been teaching at the university level for the majority of his 24 years in Japan. Along with self-regulation, his academic interests include research methodology and epistemology, and learner and teacher motivation.

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Reconsidering the Assessment of Self-Regulated Learning in Foreign Language Courses

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Abstract

This paper addresses the issue of how to assess learners' engagement with activities designed to develop self-regulatory learning strategies in the context of foreign language teaching and learning. The argument is that, if the aim of these activities is the *development* of learners' self-regulation, then the assessment practices used must also reflect this orientation. The problem herein is that traditional assessment practices are typically normative in nature, endorsing understandings of intelligence as fixed and failure as unacceptable. Using such approaches to assess learner engagement with self-regulated learning activities will undermine efforts to promote learner development, and may demotivate learners. This paper will discuss these issues through a critical reflection on assessment practices used to evaluate EFL learners' engagement with an assessable homework activity designed to develop their self-regulatory strategies. It is argued that learning-oriented assessment principles and practices are most suited to the evaluation of self-regulated learning in EFL. Potential issues related to the application of learning-oriented assessment in EFL contexts are also discussed.

Keywords: self-regulated learning, learner development, learning-oriented assessment, normative assessment practices, EFL

Today, there is a growing recognition among educators of all disciplines that one of our most important tasks as teachers is to help our learners learn how to learn. This special issue is testament to interest in this topic among foreign language educators of various backgrounds. Teachers who strongly believe in the importance of developing their learners' ability to self-regulate their learning typically act on these convictions by modifying their everyday teaching practices or introducing interventions that specifically target the development of these learning skills and strategies. The reader can find several examples of such practices in this special issue.

All in all, this is a positive development for the field of foreign language teaching and learning. However, in this paper I would like to draw attention to the little discussed issue of the assessment of learners' self-regulated learning (SRL). While a large amount of thought may go into the design of tasks and activities aiming to develop learners' ability to self-regulate their learning of foreign languages, the overall absence

of discussion on the matter suggests that less consideration is given to how to assess student performance and engagement with these activities. Helping our students develop their ability to learn may appear to be first-most in our minds. However, we must not forget that we are continuously assessing our learners' performance for various purposes: we assess to evaluate the success of our activities and levels of student understanding and interest; we assess to give students feedback on their performance and to give a score or grade to formally indicate level of achievement or engagement. Assessment is an issue for all educational contexts, but especially so in higher education, where formal assessment is omnipresent and grading, evaluation, and certification are inevitably foregrounded (Carless, 2007).

In this climate of ubiquitous assessment of learners and their learning, *how* we assess students is a question that cannot be overlooked. Here, the issue is not the method per se, although this too is important, but the philosophical approach to assessment that informs our practices. Especially in the case of activities or projects that higher education foreign language teachers set for their learners with the dual aims of facilitating learning of the target language and development of generic academic learning skills and strategies, it is crucial that a developmental or learning-oriented approach to assessment be taken. I argue that if a traditional assessment framework that is preoccupied with measurement against normative standards and certification is used, the evaluation of these activities may sabotage the very goals we are aiming to achieve through them (c.f. Benson, 2010; Dam & Legenhausen, 2010; Lamb, 2010).

My concern with the assessment of SRL has come directly from my colleague, Paul Collett, and my own experiences with introducing a self-regulated learning program into a series of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) oral communication courses at a university in Japan, and realizing, in hindsight, how our failure to address assessment principles head-on from the beginning led to the use of normative assessment approaches by classroom teachers in ways that did not necessarily support our objectives. Indeed, it is possible that the assessment approaches used had a negative impact on the students' learning, or, at the very least, their experience with the activity. In this paper, I will critically reflect upon our practices, and the normative approaches to assessment used by classroom teachers, through a discussion of theories of intelligence,

goal orientations, and learning-oriented assessment. The ultimate objective of this paper is to begin theorizing more sound ways to approach the assessment of students' engagement with tasks designed to develop their learning skills and strategies within a foreign language classroom context, and to encourage other classroom practitioners to think more deeply about their own assessment practices, especially in the case of institution-wide programs.

Although this article focuses on self-regulated learning strategy development, I believe the arguments made are also applicable to classroom interventions targeting learner autonomy, independent learning, and self-directed learning, as well as the evaluation of student use of self-access centers.

Incorporating Self-Regulated Learning into EFL Classes: The Study Progress Guide

In 2009 we introduced a supplementary learning resource named the Study Progress Guide (SPG) into the first and second year oral communication courses on offer at our university. The SPG is linked to the course textbook through the inclusion of can do statements created specifically to outline the language learning goals of each unit. The overall aim of the SPG is to develop learners' ability to self-regulate their learning of English as a foreign language through having them experience a series of activities which require them to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning throughout the semester.

Specifically, the SPG asks learners to set their own goals and learning activities for each unit of work covered in the course textbook. This begins with a self-evaluation and analysis of strengths and weaknesses supported by a series of can do statements written to reflect key language learning points covered in the unit. After choosing the area they want to work on for the unit in question, and outlining a specific study plan or learning activity for this, students put this plan into action, and then reflect on the effectiveness of the activity or strategy used. This is repeated for each unit covered over the semester, and is accompanied by other activities designed to encourage learners to identify and reflect upon their personal goals for the course (see Sullivan & Collett, 2014, for a description of these activities). The majority of this work is conducted

outside of class as a homework activity. One page from the SPG is provided in Appendix A to give readers a general idea of the activities learners complete each unit, and the content of the can do statements. A more thorough description of the SPG can be found in Collett and Sullivan (2010).

For better or worse, the SPG is very much many things at once: a device to introduce self-regulated learning practices to learners, a chance for learners to engage with their language learning in a personalized and self-directed way, and an opportunity to revise class work. It is also important to note that while the SPG includes sections which explain what makes a good goal and directions on how to choose effective learning activities there is no specific instruction on this in class, and this very much compounds the issues discussed in this paper. We are working towards addressing this by incorporating the SPG more into classroom work, thereby creating opportunities for teachers to offer more guidance. Many of the ideas for improving our use of the SPG came from the presentations and subsequent discussions at the *Self-Regulation in Foreign Language Learning: Shared Perspectives* symposium, and we are indebted to all participants for inspiring these changes. See the papers by Hutchinson and Thornton in this issue for more about the role of the teacher and teacher guidance in self-directed learning.

The SPG is currently used in two courses consisting of 19 and 11 classes respectively, which are predominately taught by part-time teachers who were not necessarily involved in the creation of the SPG or the research that informed its development. The students' work on their SPGs accounts for 20 percent of their final grade for the course, and it is the predominately part-time course instructors who are required to evaluate the SPGs and assign a score out of 20, with each unit of work to be generally given a score out of 2. A very basic scoring scale (unattempted—0 points / unacceptable—0.5 points / acceptable—1 point / good—1.5 points / excellent—2 points) is included in table form within the SPG, and teachers are asked to use this to score student work unit by unit and provide feedback; note that only the descriptive evaluation and not the number of points appears in the SPG. Apart from this, other specific theoretical or practical guidelines for approaching the assessment of the SPG are not provided, and thus teachers have been required to draw on their own beliefs

about assessment when evaluating student work. (Obviously, all of this is inherently problematic and we have since introduced bilingual rubrics (see Appendix B) and pre-semester calibration workshops to begin to address these insufficiencies. There is also a concern that this approach to scoring is essentially normative and is thus contributing to the normative assessment practices problematized in this paper. This issue will be addressed in the following sections.)

Teachers as Assessors: But What Kind of Assessors?

From our earlier interviews with students who had used the SPG, we realized that the classroom teacher can impact students' use and understanding of it (Collett & Sullivan, 2013a, 2013b). Thus, in order to learn more about this to improve the SPG and its use, at the end of the 2012 academic year we conducted an open-ended survey to investigate teacher perceptions of the SPG and student use of it, and to learn about how each individual teacher was actually using the SPG with their students. Responses given in this survey inadvertently revealed trends in teacher assessment practices and underlying assessment philosophies which directly motivated the current study.

A general theme arising from teacher responses was that many students had difficulty using the SPG, specifically with articulating strengths and weaknesses, choosing appropriate goals, and selecting learning activities related to their goals. Using the same learning activity each time was also raised as a common concern. (This is all to be expected, however, as these are precisely the skills that we are presuming most students have not yet fully developed, and this is what we are targeting through the SPG. The extent to which teachers realize and accept this will fundamentally influence their assessment practices, as we shall see in the discussion to come.) While some teachers explained how they tried to provide guidance in choosing more appropriate learning goals and activities, there seemed to be an overall belief, and a general resignation, that there was not much the teacher could do (or should do) for students not showing attempts to engage with the SPG homework. Teachers noted that students who engaged deeply with the SPG were typically students who liked English, and the effort these students made was praised. Teachers commented that it was those students who did not like English, and who would theoretically get the most out of using the SPG,

who used the SPG superficially or frequently forgot to do it. Threats, warnings and punishments were commonly used to coerce these students to engage with the SPG, although some teachers wondered if there was much point to this at all.

Teachers' feedback on the SPG, extracts of which are provided in Table 1, generally categorized learners into two groups: those who made efforts to use the SPG and those who did not or could not. Teachers typically praised the former group and penalized the latter. Threats about failing the course were often used to coerce students lumped into the latter group to use the SPG. In contrast, there were only limited accounts of teachers working with learners' SPG work to identify and discuss particular areas for improvement; it seems that there are very few opportunities for students in the latter group (those students labeled "bad learners") to get the feedback they needed to join the former. In other words, the idea of *developing* learners' skills was not being taken into account during the assessment process. The comments also suggest that teachers are tending to assess the learners as *people* rather than their *work* on the SPG tasks. My argument is that this approach to assessing students' SPG work is not conducive to achieving the development of SRL strategies.

Table 1. Extracts from Teachers' Feedback on the SPG

Examples of Categorizing and Labeling Learners
"The students who do use them [the SPG] well are the students who study hard, revise well, and score well on the tests anyway. The weaker students, who I assume are the main target, just never get a handle on how to use them effectively and, sorry to say, don't even desire to." – Teacher 6   "Most of the first year students did the [SPG] work in a timely manner. The second year students were far less timely in completing their work, although they did get it done in the end. First year students and serious students tended to do a much better job. Those who had a less positive attitude towards English did minimal work." – Teacher 4   "Some of the students really seemed to benefit from filling out their SPGs. Of course, there were also those who did very little in them, and did not put forth much effort when they did do something." – Teacher 7
Examples of Teacher Feedback: Praise and Punishment

"I gave bonus points if they [the SPGs] were well done, and tsk tsked or guilted them [the students] when it was late or not done." – Teacher 9 "I gave praise to students who did [the SPG work], and penalized when they didn't." – Teacher 5
Examples of Teacher Coercion
"I encouraged students to try different activities [for their SPG homework], even going so far as to warn them that the same activities would result in lower grades." – Teacher 4 "I tried to remind them that failure to do the SPG-related work could actually lead to them failing the class." – Teacher 7 "I just chanted the litany that 'it's part of your grade'." – Teacher 6

Approaches to Assessment: Which Approaches Support SRL Development?

Traditional approaches to assessment

I do not by any means believe that the approaches to assessment and evaluation demonstrated above are unique to these teachers. I think that these are the approaches that the vast majority of teachers take in the vast majority of cases. One could even go so far as to say that these are the approaches we are preconditioned to take within the educational culture that we belong. Moreover, it must be noted that the somewhat normative scoring system we asked teachers to use, combined with our failure to specifically encourage teachers to approach assessment in non-normative ways, no doubt reinforced this.

I believe that this dichotomized view of students as either good or bad, able or not, and the negative appraisal of the so-called "bad learners" is intrinsically linked to teachers' theories of intelligence and the goal orientations they bring into the classroom. There are generally two ways to view intelligence: as something that is fixed ("entity" theories of intelligence) or something that is malleable and can be changed ("incremental" theories of intelligence). Dweck and Master (2008) suggest that both theories are "equally popular" with "about 40% of adults and children endors[ing] an entity theory of intelligence, about 40% endors[ing] an incremental theory, and about 20% … undecided" (p. 32). It is important to recognize that these theories of intelligence "shape students' [and teachers'] goals and values, change the meaning of

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failure, and guide responses to difficulty" (Dweck & Master, 2008, p. 32).

Achievement goal orientations are "cognitive representations of positive or negative competence-relevant possibilities that are used to guide behavior" (Fryer & Elliot, 2008, p. 55) and they are closely related to theories of intelligence. Performance-avoidance goals are based upon entity theories of intelligence and are characterized by a fear of failure and a host of other conditions and behaviors that can have a negative impact on students' academic performance and general well-being, such as superficial learning and self-handicapping (Fryer & Elliot, pp. 56-57). In contrast, mastery-approach goals are connected to incremental theories of intelligence and "give rise to positive processes and outcomes" such as intrinsic motivation, enjoyment of the learning process and increased self-regulation (Fryer & Elliot, 2008, p. 56).

Stobart (2014) argues that myths about fixed ability are still widely held in education, despite what we know about learning and the development of expertise. Indeed, the majority of the assessment that occurs in formal education is conducted against normative standards where correctness is praised and failure admonished; in other words traditional approaches to assessment take on a performance goal orientation (Ames, 1992; Tunstall & Gipps, 1996). This is in spite of the fact that there seems to be general agreement that performance-avoidance goal orientations are "highly problematic in achievement situations" (Fryer & Elliot, p. 56) and "should be discouraged at all costs" (p. 57).

Learning-oriented assessment

There are ways to approach assessment that take on mastery goal orientations. This type of assessment is descriptive rather than evaluative. It provides feedback that specifies standards, areas of achievement, areas in need of improvement, and strategies to achieve this, while increasingly engaging the learner in a dialogue with the teacher about their learning, thus moving the responsibility for learning incrementally toward the learner (Tunstall & Gipps, 1996). As such, participation in this type of assessment helps learners to develop the skills necessary to become able to evaluate their own learning—i.e. it in itself contributes to the development of self-regulatory strategies.

Many terms are in use to refer to assessment that prioritizes and supports

learning over other functions, such as measurement and certification. I prefer the term learning-oriented assessment, which others have suggested helps to avoid conflicting definitions of formative assessment (Carless, 2007). Although learning-oriented assessment, formative assessment, dynamic assessment, and other variously termed non-normative approaches to evaluation have been applied in foreign language settings, studies into these applications tend to have a greater focus on the non-gradable evaluation of learner production of language during class activities, rather than on gradable assessment procedures (c.f. McNamara, 2014; Norris, 2014). This could perhaps be related to the fact that most of these studies have been carried out in primary and secondary school-based contexts, rather than within tertiary education settings where assessment takes on different purposes. This is not to say that these approaches to classroom-based assessment are not important; just that they do not offer much explicit guidance for those dealing with assessable tasks. (See the paper by Wilson in this issue for an example of good practice in classroom-based formative assessment.)

However, there is much discussion within the field of general higher education regarding sound assessment practices for supporting learning through actual assessment tasks. Moreover, there is a clear message from this growing body of work that these alternative approaches to assessment are very much geared towards the development of self-regulated learning strategies (c.f. Clark, 2012; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

Here, I would like to introduce just two examples of work in this area to give the reader an indication of the suggestions being made regarding learning-oriented assessment in higher education. Various principles important for aligning assessment practices with learning have been suggested in the higher education literature. Carless (2007) argues that assessment that is learning-oriented needs to incorporate three interconnected strands or principles (pp. 59-60):

> Principle 1. Assessment tasks should be designed to stimulate sound learning practices amongst students.
> Principle 2. Assessment should involve students actively engaging with criteria, quality, and their own and/or peers' performance.
> Principle 3. Feedback should be timely and forward-looking so as to support

current and future student learning.

Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) argue that good feedback practices support the development of learners' ability to self-regulate their learning. They offer seven principles of good feedback.

Good feedback practice:

1. helps clarify what good performance is (goals, criteria, expected standards);

2. facilitates the development of self-assessment (reflection) in learning;

3. delivers high quality information to students about their learning;

4. encourages teacher and peer dialogue around learning;

5. encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem;

6. provides opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance;

7. provides information that can be used to help shape teaching (p. 205).

I believe that incorporating these approaches into assessment will allow us to provide all learners, put simply in our case, those who are already self-regulating and those who are not yet self-regulating their learning of English as a foreign language, with the support they need to develop their abilities and move towards achieving their potential. (See the paper by O'Dwyer and Runnels in this issue for an example of learning-oriented assessment principles being applied in a process writing class. Also see Sullivan (forthcoming) for a description of learning-oriented assessment in a TOEFL preparation course.)

Assessment of Self-Regulated Learning: Why Does it Need Special Consideration?

Many would argue that all assessment should be conducted according to the principles of learning-oriented assessment. So, why is it of particular import when we talk about the assessment of student work on self-regulated learning tasks?

Firstly, underpinning self-regulated learning are theories of intelligence and ability as malleable and not fixed, so not engaging with learners who are not yet self-

regulating, and inadvertently labeling them as "bad learners", is antithetical to the aims of SRL and thus any classroom-based practices which attempt to develop SRL strategies. Secondly, when feedback is limited to "praise and punishment" it does not provide information to help students learn, which is a key aim of incorporating SRL practices into the language classroom. It also neglects the fact that the development of emerging ability requires mediation—through scaffolding, feedback, and modeling—from the teacher or more advanced peers (Lantolf & Poehner, 2011). This "co-regulation" of learning is something that our student interview participants specifically cited as being important for being able to effectively use the SPG (Collett & Sullivan, 2013a). One can easily envisage how the application of theories of intelligence as fixed and the limited provision of feedback feed into each other to negatively impact learners' motivation and self-esteem (Ames, 1992; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006), which may cause learners to take on performance rather than mastery goals, setting off a vicious cycle.

Bad assessment practices have the potential to harm: Examples

Ames (1992, p. 264) argues that "the ways in which students are evaluated is one of the most salient classroom factors that can affect student motivation." Indeed, a major concern with the traditional or normative assessment of SRL tasks is that it will not only sabotage the development of SRL skills and strategies, but also demotivate learners.

One example that we encountered in student interviews was of Learner A, a first year male student who had just finished using the SPG for one year (see also Collett & Sullivan, 2013a). Learner A startled us with his eloquent theorization of the SPG as being purely a tool to assess students' participation and engagement with the course to help the class teacher compute a final grade. He was also adamant at the onset of the interview that we, the interviewers, must think of him as a "bad learner" as he was not using the SPG in the way that he presumed was being expected. We have no specific evidence to prove how Learner A formed this view of himself in relation to his use of the SPG, or how he came to see the SPG as an evaluation tool. However, it would not be too far a stretch to imagine this being at least partly related to feedback received from

a teacher during the course. Teachers must always remember that learners pick up and internalize messages (inadvertently) embedded in teacher evaluations in ways that we may never imagine (Farrell, 2014).

Teacher assessment of student work also has the potential to harm if it disparages examples of work that the student believes to be useful for them, without offering more appropriate ideas to guide student learning. Teacher assessment relies much on teacher perceptions of student effort and thinking, which are made based on subjective and simplistic criteria, without really taking into account the thought-processes and decision-making that occurs in the minds of learners and thus remains unseen. In the case of the SPG, sections that have not been filled in or completed, the choice of "simplistic" learning activities, and repeatedly using the same learning activity are some of the common teacher "warning signs" of superficial work. However, our students may not necessarily agree.

In our interviews, another first year student, Learner B, explained how she used different learning activities depending on whether she was working on a strong point or weak point. She explained how she would sometimes personalize the target structures by using them to write about her own experiences, but when the content became difficult she would write out the structures again and again in her SPG to try to remember them. When the content became even more difficult for her in the second semester, she said: "I felt that the only thing I could do was write out the bits that I couldn't understand, and try to remember them that way. Because my study approach was the same each time, it was annoying to have to write the same explanation for each unit, so I abbreviated that section [of the SPG]."

Just as teachers have their opinions about the value and effectiveness of learning activities, so do learners. The fact that learners may be choosing learning activities based on their perception of the difficulty of the learning point, and their past experiences of success with the activity, is often not registered by teachers. When judgments are made without dialogue, the teacher may only see the once diligent student who has started to cut corners, instead of the learner who is deeply thinking about and engaging with the activity in a way that she feels best reflects her current needs and goals—whether her choices are best for her or not is another question. If this

learner is clumped into the category of "bad learner" and punished for work that she is proud of, one can only imagine the confusion and demotivation that may follow.

As Ames (1992) has argued, the instructional practices informing task selection and evaluation practices "need to be coordinated, and … directed toward the same mastery goal" (p. 266). Incorporating SRL principles within learning tasks but not assessment tasks is not only ineffective for achieving educational objectives, but potentially detrimental in terms of learner motivation.

Shifting from a Traditional to a Learning-Oriented Assessment Approach: In Practice

My aim through the discussion until now has been to show that applying traditional or normative assessment approaches literally sabotages teacher attempts to develop learners' self-regulated learning strategies. If teachers are incorporating SRL practices within their own courses, they must be aware that both the tasks they set and the methods they use to evaluate student performance need to be oriented towards learner *development*. Especially in situations like ours where there is a disconnection between curriculum development and instruction, and instruction is mainly undertaken by part-time teaching staff, building a shared assessment discourse is a crucial first step. It is unclear how widely the concept of learning-oriented assessment is known and understood, and whether it would be readily accepted by teachers so accustomed to working within a normative assessment framework. Influencing teacher beliefs about teaching (and assessment) practices is not easy (c.f. Borg, 2003) but it is crucial if SRL-based activities are going to work.

In addition to considering how to introduce ideas about alternative assessment practices to teaching staff, consequent practical issues related to such a change in assessment approaches will also need to be given consideration. Learning-oriented assessment calls for the provision of teacher feedback and chances for student-teacher dialogue. However, in cases such as ours where the majority of instructors are part-time staff who do not share the same L1 as their learners, the perpetual issues of time, language and space are obstacles to achieving this.

This could also generate inequality in assessment opportunities. Providing

opportunities for students to "complete the feedback loop" or "close the performance gap" through the resubmission of work based on teacher feedback is a typical learning-oriented assessment practice (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). However, given the obstacles introduced above, and other issues related to teacher-student relations, there is a concern that teachers may not be able to provide the same levels of quality feedback and the same chances for re-doing tasks equally to all students. These kinds of practical issues will also need to be given attention.

Finally, I believe there is a need to develop non-normative methods and tools of scoring student work. Even if we wish to conduct assessment using non-normative approaches, there is the possibility that we will slip into normative practices if we use traditional grading methods without some form of modification. One idea could be examining more specific methods of incorporating the appraisal of learner development over a course of work within grading systems and rubrics.

This paper by no means provides any answers. However, I hope it has drawn attention to the importance of the nature of assessment in self-regulated learning activities. Work conducted in general higher education is providing many practical ideas which should now be tried out in tertiary-level foreign language courses.

Acknowledgments

Notes on the contributor

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Appendices

Appendix A
An Extract from the Study Progress Guide

Appendix B
Bilingual Grading Rubrics for the Study Progress Guide

Understanding self-regulated learning: thoughts from attending the Self-Regulated Learning Symposium in Shimonoseki

Katherine Thornton, Otemon Gakuin University, Japan

As a learning advisor who has been working in self-access learning for six years, I consider myself to be familiar with the field of learner autonomy and self-directed learning, drawing on the work of Henri Holec (1981), David Little (1991), Phil Benson (2011), Anita Wenden (1998) and others in my advising practice, curriculum design projects and research. From time to time in my work, I have come across the concept of self-regulation, as opposed to self-direction, and have had the opportunity to attend several presentations on the subject, where I have found myself in a familiar-sounding yet ultimately different universe. Some of the constructs used were familiar to me, but the terms used to describe them (such as forethought and performance monitoring instead of planning and reflection), and the researchers most referenced (typically Zimmermann and Schunk (2011) as opposed to Holec or Benson) were notably different.

I was thus eager to take part in the symposium at Shimonoseki City University, Yamaguchi, entitled Self-Regulation in Foreign Language Learning: Shared Perspectives, to learn more about it.

The symposium ran for two days, with only one presentation room, which meant that every participant was able to attend all the presentations. This and the relatively small size (around 40 participants over the weekend) created a friendly and supportive atmosphere, conducive to discussion and the sharing of ideas.

Day One

Many of the papers presented at the symposium are now available in this special issue, so, in the interests of conserving space, I would like to focus on several presentations and interactions from the symposium which have helped me to understand the relevance of the concept of self-regulation for my own advising and self-access practice, and my understanding of how it relates to the fields with which I am more familiar: learner autonomy and self-directed learning.

The presentation that did most to impress upon me the similarities and essential differences between learner autonomy and self-regulation was the keynote

given by Garold Murray, from Okayama University, on the first day of the symposium. Garold compared the two constructs, showing both similarities, and ways in which they diverge. In particular, he pointed out the different "mindsets" of learner autonomy and self-regulated learning, and their differing backgrounds: learner autonomy emerged from within the tradition of TESOL pedagogy and therefore has been researched by practicing language teachers, whereas self-regulated learning has its origins in educational psychology.

As Garold asserted in his presentation, both autonomy and self-regulation are seen as learner characteristics, and both now acknowledge the important role of the social context, in addition to the individual's cognitive and metacognitive processes. However, there are also some notable differences. Research into self-regulated learning usually frames the learner as responding to a task ultimately set by the teacher, whereas, within learner autonomy, learners tend to be acknowledged as being able to take responsibility over initiation of the learning task itself. In this way, the ability to self-regulate could be seen as a prerequisite for, but not synonymous with, a learner becoming autonomous.

This point resonated more deeply with me later in the day, during the presentation by Stella Millikan from Kyushu Sangyo University. She explained the difficult journey she and her students had undertaken to improve their time management skills for a course which required intensive vocabulary learning out-of-class each week, and which many of her students had previously failed.

As one of the participants commented to Stella after her excellent presentation, the course was hardly autonomous; all students had a set list of the same words to learn and had to record the same required information about each word, regardless of their individual familiarity with each term. However, Stella's use of a detailed scheduling document that she first encountered working in a junior high school to make the students' aware of and accountable for their spare time, and the success she has had with engaging students in this approach, reminded me that self-regulation did not necessarily imply full autonomy.

The students she described were not very autonomous in the wider sense of the concept; they may not have a strong awareness of their motivations for language learning or the ability to set personally meaningful learning goals within the constraints of the course. However, through Stella's work on time management

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strategies they had to a certain extent become self-regulated, if only to a narrow degree.

This made me think about whether autonomy itself should always be the ultimate goal for students in my own context. The starting point for any self-directed learning, after building awareness of some of the major concepts, is a process of goal-setting and the writing of a learning plan. This was the approach taken in a course designed to foster self-directed learning skills I previously ran at Kanda University of International Studies (Navarro & Thornton, 2011). While I strongly believe that learners who can set their own learning goals, carry out a plan designed to help them achieve these goals, and reflect on their chosen learning strategies will be more effective language learners, my experience as an advisor has also brought me into contact with many students who seem reluctant to engage in this style of learning. While there may be many reasons for this, such as unfamiliarity with this way of learning, or a lack of motivation, Stella's presentation made me think that the way I had organized my previous course was, to a certain extent, the wrong way round. Whereas I had started the course with goal-setting activities, I now realize that this is actually quite a cognitively challenging task, for which many students, especially freshmen, were just not ready. These students may have benefitted from a more structured approach to the development of single cognitive strategies for self-regulating their existing language learning practices, such as the time management focus described by Stella, before moving on to the more difficult task of identifying personal learning goals.

A similar point had also been raised by Caroline Hutchinson from Kanda University of International Studies, in the first presentation of the day. Caroline followed a similar structure to my own course as part of her freshman English class designed to develop independent learning skills. She had also found that some students seemed overwhelmed by the demands of the course and ultimately became demotivated. As freshman students, many of them had little previous exposure to alternative ways of learning English and did not have the ability to articulate specific language learning goals or choose suitable learning materials and strategies. One of Caroline's conclusions was that students may benefit from being given more time to experiment with several new learning strategies before deciding which areas of their English they want to focus on. This resonates with my thought that to start a course

with a full-blown needs analysis may be setting students a higher metacognitive task than some of them can handle at the beginning.

Providing instruction and support at a suitable level for learners was a theme which was returned to in the closing discussion of the first day. Many participants admitted to struggling with this issue, especially in larger classes where one-to-one support is rarely possible, such as the course described by Martin Mullen and Chris Fitzgerald, from Meisei University, in their presentation on the teacher's role in fostering learner autonomy. Even in my work as an advisor, where I do have the opportunity to work with individual learners, it can often be very difficult to gauge the degree of guidance suitable for each student at each stage in their learning. In addition to different approaches being employed for learners at different stages, individual advisors and teachers also differ in their approaches, and while there may be a general consensus in much of the literature to avoid too much prescription, from the discussion it was clear that there is a significant gap between this ideal and what many practitioners, including myself, consider realistic and practical in their own contexts.

After a full day of engaging presentations and constructive discussion, delegates took the opportunity to unwind over a very nice meal of Shimonoseki's signature dish, *fugu,* or blowfish, organized by the symposium conveners, Kristen Sullivan and Paul Collett, who both work at the host university, Shimonoseki City University.

Day Two

The second day of the symposium kicked off with a presentation from Kristen and Paul, who had selflessly given themselves the most unpopular timeslot of the weekend – the morning after the night before; but they were greeted with a high level of attendance despite the previous evening's festivities. Kristen and Paul reported on the latest findings of their long term project to develop their students' self-regulated learning skills through the use of a Study Progress Guide which they have developed to supplement the textbook used by teachers at the university. They emphasized the fact that being aware of and understanding both teacher expectations of using such materials, and student reactions to using them, is vital for such materials to succeed in their aims. This point chimed with my own conviction of the importance of being aware of learners' beliefs about language learning and self-directed learning, and how these beliefs influence student behaviour, which I had emphasized in my presentation

the previous day. This idea was echoed in the following presentation by Akiyuki Sakai and Atsumi Yamaguchi, from Kanda University of International Studies, about investigating teachers' views on how self-directed learning skills should be taught.

In the second and final keynote presentation of the symposium, Yoshiyuki Nakata, from Hyogo University of Teacher Education, gave a comprehensive overview of self-regulated learning, situating it within the wider fields of learner autonomy and motivation, and focusing on the ways in which affect, cognition and behaviour interact. Through data from two studies, a quantitative analysis of over 1000 Japanese secondary students, and a qualitative study of 12 graduate school students undertaking self-regulated learning, Yoshiyuki highlighted how it is not just cognitive actions, but also one's emotions, which require self-regulation for successful learning. He emphasized that students require not only cognitive scaffolding but also motivational/affective scaffolding from teachers, again highlighting the role of teachers and significant others in developing self-regulated learning skills.

The following presentation by Sakae Onoda, from Kanda University of International Studies, reinforced the importance of the role of affect, in the form of self-efficacy beliefs. In his study, structural equation modeling was used to investigate the relationship between self-regulation strategies, self-efficacy, and L2 vocabulary learning.

The closing discussion of the day was facilitated by Kristen and Paul, the organizers, who asked participants to jot down or tweet questions and thoughts they wanted to explore during the day. Rather than addressing any single presentation, these questions and the ensuing discussion were quite broad. Topics touched on included when and how self-regulated learning instruction should take place, in what format (e.g. in a stand-alone course, integrated into language curriculum, or in a self-access centre), and from what age. The vast majority of researchers in the field, and certainly the presenters at this symposium, are working as teachers in universities, and therefore it is maybe unsurprising that the presentations focused almost exclusively on higher education. However, the point was made that students have 12 years of schooling before they reach university, and if self-regulation is such an important and transferable skill, we shouldn't be waiting until they reach university to focus on it.

Conclusion

By the end of the weekend, although tired from listening to many presentations, I was happy to have had the chance to reflect on my own practice, and discuss ideas and approaches with the other delegates. In recent years, I have come to realize that small, focused events such as this one held in Shimonoseki are far more valuable to me than huge conferences where I end up missing more promising presentations than I see. The opportunities to meet and connect with like-minded people and exchange ideas for both teaching/advising and research have made such events invaluable, and this enjoyable weekend was no exception.

Notes on the contributor

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Introduction

Katherine Thornton (Column Editor), Otemon Gakuin University, Osaka, Japan

As the social dimensions of learning in general and learner autonomy in particular are being given increasing attention in recent years, Michael Allhouse's column about the re-invigoration of the self-access centre (SAC) at his institution as a social learning space is an interesting insight into how these theories of learning can be applied to the field of self-access. In this instalment, Michael discusses some research that has been conducted into student reactions to this new approach to self-access provision

Researching the New Room 101: "A Safe Haven for Me to Learn"

Michael Allhouse, University of Bradford Union, UK.

The Self-Access Centre (SAC) at the University of Bradford (UoB), in the UK, is called Room 101. Over the past ten years Room 101 has adapted its approach, moving away from providing materials-based resources like books and CDs and becoming a social learning space; a space where students learn from each other in person, through interaction-based activities. These activities are sometimes in structured and sometimes in unstructured environments. Materials-based activities (paper-based, CDs or software) are mostly completed alone. Interaction-based activities (such as discussion clubs and informal social interaction) focus less on formal learning and more on interacting and communicating in English (or another language).

The previous instalment of this column examined how Room 101 had seen usage decline as a result of the closure of foreign language courses and the widespread provision of learning resources on the Internet. It outlined how Room 101 settled on an interaction-based / social learning approach, which has reinvigorated the centre.

Even though Room 101's social learning approach was developed primarily as a result of engaging with student feedback, it was not until 2013 that any research into student reaction to the approach was conducted. The research aimed to measure which services provided by Room 101 students most valued, and to analyse the extent to which materials-based activities and

interaction-based / social learning activities were seen as attractive by students. This instalment of the column focuses on this research.

Room 101 hosts a range of interaction-based / social learning activities. An example of one of our structured sessions is the debating club which meets every Wednesday for two hours and covers a range of topics. The session is run by the writer of this article and is focussed on giving international students (whether on English language courses or mainstream courses) English speaking practice so that they become more confident in their English use (usage of Room 101 includes students on English language courses, but during the time of this research attendance on such courses was low, meaning that most Room 101 users were international students studying mainstream courses). An example of another social learning activity is IELTS speaking practice which follows the format of an IELTS speaking test.

Less structured interactions also take place daily in Room 101 with full-time staff and student volunteer staff being encouraged to engage users in conversation in English. Room 101 also regularly holds cultural parties like Christmas parties, Chinese New Year parties, national day celebrations, and regular afternoon tea sessions. These events are attended by students from many different nationalities, meaning that they promote social interaction amongst peers in English.

Research Methodology

The research discussed in this instalment is mainly centred on a survey of Room 101 users, and a focus group conducted in 2013. The questionnaire was created using a webpage called Surveymonkey which was then distributed electronically.

The survey targeted international students who had used Room 101 to ensure that the sources of information were experienced in the topic (Polkinghorne, 2005). Selecting respondents who are relevant to the research study is known as purposive sampling. Purposive sampling can mean however that respondents might have some bias in favour of the provision (Maxwell, 2005). In order to maintain a purposive approach the survey was distributed via Facebook, requesting that only users of Room 101 fill out the survey. Facebook was a valuable tool as Room 101 already had a very engaged community on this social media platform.

Since the main aim of the questionnaire was to explore students' reactions to Room 101's new approach, the questions were focussed on determining the elements of Room 101's provision which students valued most. The questions assessed what students valued, what else

students would like, and how Room 101 could be improved. The questions were piloted in a focus group of regular Room 101 users, to examine whether they were clearly stated. No amendments were made as a result of the focus group.

It was important that the questions were student-friendly and simply stated, with the questionnaire being easy for students to fill out, as this allowed for promotion of the survey over social media as, 'it will only take a minute to complete', which ensured a large number of Room 101 users would complete the questionnaire. Over a two week period 75 users attempted the survey, although not all users completed every question.

The survey questions were:

1. Of the following services provided by Room 101, please state how often you use each one. (list of choices)
2. What else would you like to see in Room 101? (list of choices)
3. What do you like most about Room 101? (open question)
4. How can we improve Room 101? (open question)
5. What course are you studying / did you study at the University of Bradford? (open question)

Question 1 asked how often people used various services and gave a number of options which were derived from a list of possible SAC activities. This list was populated using suggestions for SAC activities from the works of Little (1989), Gardner (2000b), McMurry, Tanner, and Anderson, (2010), Morrison (2005), and Del Rocío Domínguez Gaona (2007), which could be seen as primarily materials-based SAC activities. The list also included activities from the research of Croker and Ashurova (2012) which can be seen as interaction-based. The interaction-based / social learning activities provided by Room 101 were also included in the list. It was possible to conduct all of the activities in the list in Room 101.

The list of activities can be seen in Table 1. The Table is divided into three columns: 'materials-based activities', 'interaction-based activities', and 'other activities' which do not fit these two categories.

Table 1. Materials-based and Interaction-based Activities in a SAC.

Materials-based Activities	Interaction-based Activities	Other Activities
- Using English language learning books and CDs - Using internet resources to learn English - Reading newspapers / magazines - Using English language material specially created by - Room 101 staff - Using tape recorders to practice language	- Attending organized discussion sessions like Debating Club or IELTS Speaking Practice - Attending the foreign language classes taught by students - Meeting another student for a language exchange - Socialising with other students / Room 101 staff - Attending special events like parties, art events, cultural celebrations like Chinese New Year, etc - Relaxing - Attending clubs like reading club / art club / movie club	- Attending staff one-to-one writing help sessions - Attending an English language class with a tutor - Doing work connected to your degree course - Using computers for pleasure

In Question 1 respondents were asked how often they use each service from the list and were given several possible answers on a rating scale of 1 to 5, in order to ascertain frequency of use. The students could respond from 'never using a service' (1), to using it 'many times each day' (5). A table of the results (Table 2) can be seen in the next section.

Question 3; 'What do you like most about Room 101?' and 4; 'How can we improve Room 101?' resulted in answers which were limited in range and could be grouped according to a number of themes. Using grounded theory analysis (using categories which emerged from the data) (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) the answers were coded into a limited number of categories which could then be analysed.

After the collection of the questionnaire data a focus group of students was formed to address the findings. Fifteen students who had all completed the survey and were regular users of Room 101 took part in a two hour session led by the author of this column. Questions for the Focus Group can be found in the Appendix.

Results and Observations

Survey results

The first question in the survey, 'Of the following services provided by Room 101, please state how much you use each one', attempted to get some frequency of usage data. Table 2 shows how often the students state that they access each activity (not all students answered this question).

Table 2 shows that the activities which got the highest number of (code 5) responses were relaxing, socialising, and using computers for pleasure. The least popular activities (highest number of (code 1) responses) were using materials-based resources and equipment (tape recorders, DVD/CD players, materials created by Room 101 staff) for language (and particularly English) learning, attending English classes, and the one-to-one writing sessions with language staff.

A limitation of this research is that the figures need to be contextualised, as some events, for example Debating Club only happen once a week, so for students to rate it higher than (3) is difficult. However, in the 'use once a week' (3) section it scored highest. Other activities, like using books / CDs can be done all day, every day. Some activities, like writing help are done one-to-one so very few people can attend this in comparison to something like using the Internet to learn English, which can be done by many people at the same time.

Table 2. Results of the Question 'Of the following services provided by Room 101, please state how much you use each one'.

Code	1	2	3	4	5
Frequency of use	Never	Once a month	Once a week	Every day	More than once a day
Materials-based Activities					
Using English language learning books and CDs	30	13	5	3	1
Using foreign language books and CDs	28	9	6	6	3
Using internet resources to learn English	22	9	12	6	3
Using English language material specially created by Room 101 staff	29	10	9	2	1
Reading newspapers / magazines	15	8	13	14	2
Using tape recorders to practice language	35	8	7	1	1
Interaction-based Activities					
Attending organised English speaking sessions like debating club or IELTS speaking practice	16	13	16	4	2
Attending foreign language classes taught by students	21	8	15	6	2
Meeting another student for a language exchange	20	9	12	6	5
Socialising with other students / Room 101 staff	5	13	14	8	12
Attending special events like parties, art events, cultural celebrations like Chinese New Year, etc	12	21	8	6	5
Going to Room 101 just to relax	8	8	13	9	14
Attending organized clubs like Reading Club / Art Club / Film Club	23	10	10	5	4
Other Activities					
Attending staff one-to-one writing help sessions	31	12	3	5	1
Attending an English language class with a tutor	26	8	14	3	1
Doing work connected to your degree course	20	9	10	8	5
Using computers for pleasure	16	7	14	6	9

As materials-based SAC activities were the activities most likely to be 'never used' (using tape recorders to practice language, using foreign language books and CDs, using English

language learning books and CDs, using English language material specially created by Room 101 staff), it can be suggested that students no longer value Room 101 for its opportunities to use materials-based resources. The most popular activities (5) were socializing, relaxing and (factoring in the limited availability) facilitated interaction-based activities like the Debating Club. It can be suggested that students most value most highly the ability to practice English by socialising with other students and staff (interaction-based activities).

Observations of Room 101 usage from the 2011 Annual Report show that interaction-based activities were also popular in Room 101 at that time (Figure 1). The data in Figure 2 was based on observations over a week long period in 2011. Over the course of the week all students entering Room 101 were observed and sometimes briefly questioned to discover their reasons for using Room 101. Figure 1 shows that materials-based activities such as 'using 101 language resources' (any materials-based language practice including CALL and internet language learning was categorised as 'using 101 language resources') were less popular than social learning activities. 'General working on computers' in this survey was taken to be working on essays for mainstream courses or browsing for enjoyment.
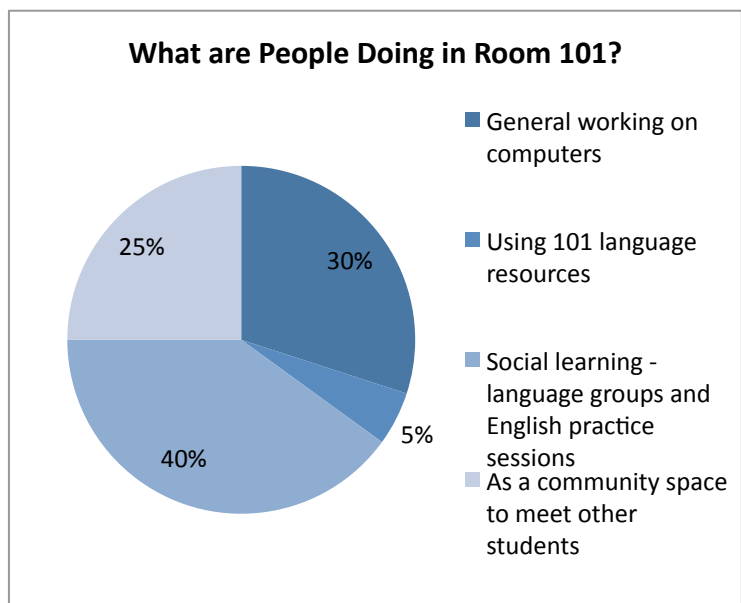

Figure 1. Findings From Observation Research in 2011 About Room 101 Usage

Question 2 was an attempt to address the gaps in Room 101's provision and to ascertain if students want more interaction-based activities or more materials-based provision. The

question asked was: 'What else would you like to see in Room 101?' A list of choices was given. The most popular responses are illustrated in Figure 2.
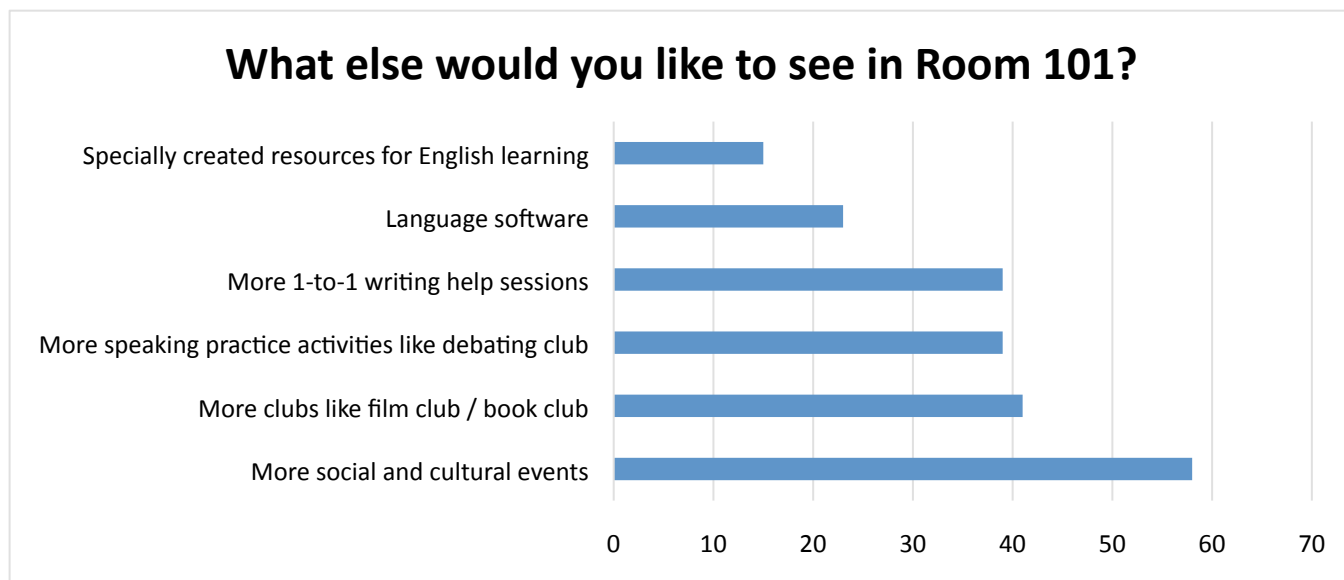

What else would you like to see in Room 101?

Figure 2. The Results of the Question 'What else would you like to see in Room 101?'

The most popular responses were more social and cultural events, clubs, and more speaking practice. It can be said that it was interaction-based activities that were most requested, as well as more 1-to-1 writing help sessions. There were few requests for materials-based activities such as English resources and language software.

Question 3 was an open-ended question; 'What do you like most about Room 101?' The responses were coded according to the following three categories used a grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998):

CODE 1. Friendly and relaxing place – 33 responses
CODE 2. Helpful staff – 26 responses
CODE 3. Social learning activities – 10 responses

Table 3 gives a few examples of the responses.

Table 3. Examples of Coded Responses to Question 'What do you like most about Room 101?'

Response	Code
'The friendly atmosphere'	1
'The atmosphere'	1
'Amiable atmosphere'	1
'Always being there some staff to help and ask about certain issues'	2
'Debating sessions. Organized events and celebrations'	3

The particularly high response rates for 'Friendly and relaxing place' and 'Helpful staff' demonstrate that students value the friendly atmosphere most, i.e. the informal use of Room 101 for speaking and socialising. There was no mention from any of the respondents of any materials-based activities.

In the answers to this question students repeatedly referred to the value of being able to practice their English in an informal setting:

"The friendliness of the place where you can find someone to have conversation with for English practice."

"I found Room 101 was a place which encouraged me to talk more English and which really helped me to improve my confidence. It is friendly there so I feel encouraged and don't mind making mistakes."

Some responses were particularly interesting, such as the following:

"During my three years in Bradford, I have made Room 101 as a safe haven for me to learn about the local culture and exchanging knowledge of other culture from other foreign peers. Room 101 made me more curious about my surroundings and I guess, made me into a very open-minded individual. It is also due to the staff who would listen to us even though our grip of the English language was poor."

Whilst friendliness, helpfulness and encouragement may seem only weakly related to language learning in SACs, there are some connections: Schumann's acculturation theory (1978) states that engaging with a culture and feeling at home is strongly related to language acquisition.

In Room 101 students are socialising with home students and staff (as well as people of other nationalities) in English, and are engaging in activities around British culture (such as informal workshops on British culture and culture shock, as part of our workshop programme). All of this helps acculturate students to their environment and encourages engagement with the language.

The friendly atmosphere of Room 101 can also be said to relate to Krashen's (1987) theory of the lowering of the affective filter, in that students feel confident to enter the room, engage with activities and engage with English because of the friendly, supportive atmosphere.

The next question in the survey was; 'How can we improve Room 101?' The responses could again be grouped according to grounded theory coding into categories, as follows:

CODE 1. More social learning and cultural events – 15 responses

CODE 2. Increase awareness of Room 101's provision – 9 responses

CODE 3. Operational improvements – 3 responses

CODE 4. More 1-to-1 writing help sessions - 2 responses

Table 4 gives examples of the responses.

Table 4. Examples of Coded Responses to Question 'How can we improve Room 101?'

Response	Code
"More tea parties"	1
"More conversation groups"	1
"By promoting more events even to UK friends so they can be involved"	2
"Advertise it more around University and make it clear how to go"	2
"More space for sitting down, the language classes were pretty cramped"	3
"Extend opening time"	3
"More Writing session or one on one session"	4

The answers to this question strongly suggest that the social and cultural elements of the room are what the students really value. Users did not demand more materials-based, language learning resources. Indeed, no respondent mentioned materials-based activities, but many mentioned having more social learning activities. This, in combination with the results of

Question 2; 'What else would you like to see in Room 101?' show that more social learning clubs and cultural events are the most requested elements of Room 101.

Focus group findings

A month after the completion of the survey, in order to further explore its findings and look at whether students prefer materials-based or interaction-based activities, the writer of this column conducted a focus group. A number of questions about what users like to do in Room 101 and about language learning were asked. There was discussion around the issues which arose.

There was a set list of questions for the focus group (see Appendix), which focussed on the same issues as the questionnaire, but went in to more detail. The focus group mostly confirmed the conclusions of the survey, in that the group spoke passionately about the social learning activities and the use of Room 101 as a friendly space for international students. The group did not mention the material-based resources as an attraction for them, or as something they had used.

When asked about how they like to learn English the group unanimously said practicing speaking and listening through conversation and social interaction. When asked why they don't use the book / CD resources in Room 101 they said it was because there was sufficient practice material on the internet and because they did not have the time – having too much other work to do. When they were asked about practicing their reading and writing skills they said they knew there were classes for this at the university and workbooks available in Room 101, but again they didn't have the time to use these or to attend the classes. This finding is similar to the finding by Klassen Detaramani, Lui, Patri, and Wu, (1998) that students acknowledge the value of extra study workshops but rarely actively chose to attend them, citing lack of time as the main reason.

The focus group were asked if they thought interaction-based activities in Room 101 and the chance to socialise in English were having an effect on their English skills. They said that they felt taking part in social learning activities had given them good practice in English usage, as well as increased their confidence to speak in English. One focus group member from Turkey said the following:

"The Room 101 social activities provide a friendly atmosphere to discuss issues. Often foreign students are afraid to speak up due to lack of confidence in their English. In Room 101, the activities give many the confidence to speak up and be heard. I think this positive effect feeds back into their own departments. In my first year, I certainly wouldn't have been as confident in seminars, if not for the practice I'd received in Room 101."

Conclusion

The research discussed in this instalment has looked at whether the new, social learning approach of Room 101 is attractive to students. By asking students what services they value and what services they would like, the research attempted to assess if students want materials-based or interaction-based activities. The survey and focus group both showed that interaction-based / social learning activities are more attractive and more used than materials-based activities in Room 101. Students clearly value the room as a space to socialise and relax, as well as engaging in structured social learning activities such as debating group and specific cultural events. Students do not seem to want to use materials-based resources in Room 101, nor seem particularly interested in this as a way of improving their English.

There are several limitations to this research which should be acknowledged. The study is relatively small, and it is necessary to be aware of the researcher effect in the focus group which may have biased the group to be more positive about Room 101's social learning focus. The research also only addressed frequency of usage and what students wanted more of; it did not look at effectiveness in terms of language acquisition of either materials-based or interaction-based activities. This could be an area of future research.

Room 101's social learning success raises questions about the ability of materials-based resources to attract students to SACs. The next instalment of this column will describe the administration of a survey of SAC managers in the UK in 2013 which assessed how their provision had changed in recent years and what elements of their provision were most popular with students. The instalment will attempt to examine the extent to which the experiences of Room 101 are typical of the sector.

Notes on the contributor

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Appendix

Focus Group Questions

- What's the best thing about Room 101?

- What do you do in Room 101?

- What other things could we do in Room 101?

- How do you like to learn English?

- How do you like to practice your English?

- Do you use the materials-based resources in Room 101?

- Why don't you use the book / CD resources in Room 101?

- Do you attend Language Centre reading and writing skills classes? (if not, why not?)

- What more could the University do to help you improve your English?

- Do you think the interaction-based activities in Room 101 help you with your English learning / English confidence?