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Scaffolding Self-Regulated Learning for English as an Additional Language Literacy Learners

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Abstract

Emergent multilingual English as an additional language literacy learners (EALLs) have unique learning needs as they are learning to read and write for the first time in any language while they are also beginning to develop formal learning strategies that support successful school-based learning. Consequently, EALLs require specialized instruction in how to regulate the metacognitive, cognitive, behavioural, motivational, and emotional aspects of learning in formal classroom environments. Theories of self-regulated learning can inform English as an additional language (EAL) literacy programming and guide instructors in the development of EALLs' formal learning strategies. The effective use of formal self-regulated learning strategies for planning, monitoring, and evaluating learning is essential for successful school-based learning. In this paper, we review three models of self-regulation (Dörnyei, 2005; Oxford, 2017; Zimmerman, 2013) that inform an instructional sequence designed to support EALLs' self-regulated learning in the classroom. We describe our research-informed instructional sequence and provide examples of how instructors can encourage EALLs' use of self-regulatory strategies including commitment, metacognitive, satiation, emotional, and environment control strategies, as well as the development of metastrategies that support self-regulated learning. In summary, we demonstrate how research on self-regulated learning can inform instructional practices for EALLs in EAL literacy classes.

Introduction

Emergent multilingual English as an additional language literacy learners (EALLs) are readers who are learning to decode/encode print for the first time in any language and those who have either been denied access to formal school-based learning or have few prior experiences with formal learning. In British Columbia and elsewhere in Canada, many of these learners attend English as an additional language (EAL) literacy classes offered in programs such as Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) that are guided by the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLBs) (CCLB, 2012). The goal of LINC programming is to provide newcomer immigrants and people with refugee experiences with basic formal language instruction and other settlement related knowledge and skills to facilitate their integration into Canadian society (IRCC, 2020). In LINC, there are two streams of language instruction: one for literate EAL

learners who are able to use their first language literacy to support their English language learning and the other for EALLs. The CLBs are national standards that describe 12 levels of EAL proficiency across three stages: Stage 1/beginner, CLB 1–4; Stage 2/intermediate, CLB 5–8; Stage 3/advanced, CLB 7–12. In addition to language and pragmatic knowledge, strategic competence is an important component in models of additional language proficiency (e.g., Bachman & Palmer, 1996, 2010) that inform the CLBs (CCLB, 2015). Current conceptualizations of strategic language learning and use are grounded in self-regulation theory, as the ability to autonomously deploy language learning and use strategies relies on the learners' capacity to regulate their cognition, emotions, and social behaviours (Oxford, 2017). However, the benchmarks and their theoretical framework (CCLB, 2015) do not directly reference any models of self-regulation that could inform instruction for EALLs enrolled in pre-benchmark and CLB 1–4 literacy classes.

Self-regulation involves the ability to control one's thoughts, feelings, behaviours, motivation, and to some extent the environment to achieve one's goals (Dörnyei, 2005; Oxford, 2017; Zimmerman, 2000). Self-regulated learning (SRL) strategies can facilitate language learning by promoting the goal directed behaviours involved in planning for, monitoring, and evaluating one's language learning efforts, performance, and outcomes (Oxford, 2017). We argue that EALLs, particularly those who were denied access to any formal school-based learning, will benefit from self-regulation instruction as they have been reported to struggle with the formal strategies required for success in the EAL literacy classroom (Faux & Watson, 2020; Wrigley, 2010), such as utilizing print literacy strategies to manage their time and reflect on learning (Abbott et al., 2021). By fostering their students' awareness and control of their self-regulatory behaviours, instructors can encourage students to transition from being teacher-regulated strategy users to self-regulated strategy users.

In the ensuing sections, we briefly review three models of self-regulation (Dörnyei, 2005; Oxford, 2017; Zimmerman, 2013). Then we present a research-informed instructional sequence to guide SRL strategy instruction for EALLs in task-based language classes in which learners are taught to complete real-life tasks such as filling out a form at a doctor's office. We also share an SRL strategy observation checklist for instructors to use or adapt for use in their EAL literacy classes.

EALLs in LINC

Adult literacy learners, who are developing print literacy for the first time in any language,

were never able to develop the basic reading and writing skills that form the foundation for acquiring literacy and for other kinds of learning. They face the dual challenge of learning a new language while trying to develop the skills and strategies associated with decoding and comprehending print. (Condelli, 2020, p. vii)

LINC providers recognize these challenges; therefore, when numbers permit, EALLs are initially placed in specialized LINC literacy classes to assist them in developing “the skills and strategies that will help them cope and continue learning in mainstream classes [in the future]” (CCLB, 2016, p. 11). These skills and strategies extend beyond basic reading and writing in English, and

encompass how to learn in formal classroom environments that incorporate print-based material in most learning activities and tasks. Although adult EAL literacy learners have developed significant skills and knowledge through lived experience, expectations of formal learning environments are often unfamiliar to them (DeCapua, 2016). For this reason, literacy instructors from British Columbia and Ontario have expressed the need to prioritize the development of EALLs' academic skills (Fleming et al., 2015). In British Columbia, organizations such as the Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies (AMSSA) have taken on the responsibility of supporting LINC service providers (Mudzingwa, 2020) and have produced a resource guide (Solnes et al., 2019) that highlights the need to accommodate EAL literacy learners in LINC and references the resources developed by Bow Valley College for EALLs. Bow Valley College (2018) has created instructional frameworks and guidelines for explicit instruction in goal-setting, reflection, and organizational and time management strategies for EALLs; however, these resources do not reflect the current reconceptualization of learning strategies research through the lens of self-regulation theory (see Oxford, 2017).

Self-Regulation and Learning

Learning in a classroom setting involves self-regulatory processes that have been delineated in several models of self-regulation. Three models that are useful for informing instructional decisions to develop EALLs' formal SRL strategies and promote their language learning include Zimmerman's (2000) SRL cycle, Dörnyei's (2005) conceptual self-regulation model of control in second language (L2) learning, and Oxford's (2017) strategic self-regulation model in L2 learning. These models are described in the following sections.

The Self-Regulated Learning Cycle

Zimmerman's (2000) theory of SRL is informed by the work of Vygotsky (1978), who argued that cognitive abilities and language develop through social interactions. Consequently, in Zimmerman's theory, self-regulation develops through the mediation/scaffolding of more capable others. The more capable other, often a teacher, breaks down the learning task into the essential components, so that the learners become aware of the parts and then assists the learners in planning for, monitoring, and evaluating their performance as they complete each part of the task. This other-regulation by the teacher supports the development of student self-regulation.

Zimmerman (2013) divided the SRL cycle into three phases that occur before, during and after task performance, and involve processes such as goal setting, pre-task planning, and monitoring, controlling and reflecting on task performance. Experiences incurred throughout the phases and processes inform the next SRL cycle. Research suggests that some students are better than others at SRL (see Zimmerman, 2013). Zimmerman (2013) explained that "students who set superior goals proactively, monitor their learning intentionally, use strategies effectively, and respond to personal feedback adaptively not only attain mastery more quickly, but also are more motivated to sustain their efforts to learn" (p. 135). Zimmerman (2000) attributed student difficulties in self-regulation to not having had the SRL cycle taught and modelled for them in school—a typical state of affairs for EALLs, particularly those who have been denied access to formal school-based learning.

Conceptual Self-Regulation Model of Control in L2 Learning

Dörnyei's (2005) conceptualization of self-regulation in L2 learning, which is based on Zimmerman's (2000) idea of task control, includes five categories of control strategies:

1. *Commitment control strategies* focus on goal attainment by keeping positive incentives or rewards in mind.
2. *Metacognitive control strategies* maintain attention and reduce unnecessary procrastination by focusing on the first step of a task or by identifying distractions.
3. *Satiation control strategies* add interest to tasks and eliminate boredom by introducing creative variations or challenges into the task.
4. *Emotion control strategies* manage disruptive emotions through the use of relaxation and meditation techniques and positive self-talk.
5. *Environmental control strategies* reduce environmental stressors and make the environment more supportive of goal attainment (e.g., moving away from distracting sources or using the resources in the classroom to support learning).

By developing additional language learners' awareness and control of these self-regulatory strategies, these learners can improve their task performance (Dörnyei's, 2005; Tseng et al., 2006).

The Strategic Self-Regulation Model of Language Learning

Oxford's (2017) model of strategic self-regulation is also situated in sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978). From this perspective, self-regulated language learning is socioculturally mediated through interacting with others and with cultural, linguistic, and technological tools and resources. In Oxford's (2017) model, paying attention, planning, organizing learning, monitoring, and evaluating are conceptualized as metastrategies that are used to control/regulate specific aspects of additional language learning including one's thoughts, emotions, motivation, and social interactions. Oxford also emphasized the influence of self-efficacy on self-regulated learning, as learners need to believe in their own ability to achieve their goals by strategically overcoming barriers to learning. Teacher mediation (i.e., assistance/scaffolding) plays an important role in the development of students' self-regulation including their ability to use SRL strategies to overcome these barriers.

Self-Regulation and the Adult EAL Literacy Learner

In the L2 self-regulation research literature, SRL strategy use has been found to predict EAL learning achievement in studies conducted with learners who possess well-developed first language literacy skills (Chen et al., 2020; Seker, 2016; Teng & Zhang, 2016), and one recent study conducted with EALLs has shown that SRL strategy use is associated with their literacy achievement (Abbott et al., 2021). These findings suggest that adult additional language learners who have emergent literacy skills will likely benefit from educational experiences that develop their strategic self-regulation. Our experience teaching and working with EALLs, however, indicates that the development of their formal SRL strategies can be challenging for a number of reasons. First, SRL strategies involved in planning for, monitoring, and evaluating one's own

learning typically rely on print-based literacy, and EAL learners who are becoming literate for the first time are in the process of developing these formal learning strategies that will support their additional language classroom learning (e.g., note-taking, utilizing print-based reference materials/resources). Second, if EALLs were either denied access to or had few prior experiences with formal, school-based learning, this lack of formal schooling reduces the likelihood that they have had the SRL cycle modelled for them in a formal learning environment or received other forms of teacher mediation to scaffold their formal SRL. Third, many EALLs are unfamiliar with expectations of how to regulate their cognition, emotions, and behaviours in a formal classroom environment. For example, LINC instructors have reported that self-reflection in English is often difficult for EALLs (Abbott et al., 2021), yet self-reflection is a key component of SRL (Zimmerman, 2013). We argue that explicit instruction and structured practice in using SRL strategies in EAL literacy classes can overcome these challenges and improve EALLs' ability to control their language learning in formal environments.

Self-Regulated Strategy Instruction for EALLs

Explicit instruction throughout the SRL cycle involves teaching learners how to first of all plan for effective task completion before attempting a language task; secondly monitor/control thoughts, feelings (e.g., self-beliefs), behaviours (e.g., concentration) and motivation to keep trying during the task; and finally evaluate/reflect on task performance and strategy use after completing the task. In our experience, our 10 step research-informed instructional sequence which outlines specific practices and activities has been successfully used to guide and support EALLs' through each phase of the SRL process (i.e., before, during, and after task performance). The 10 steps were also designed to develop EALLs' understanding of the three key words in the SRL cycle: plan, monitor, and evaluate. The activities in the steps may need to be simplified/scaffolded for EALLs at CLB 1 or extended for those at CLB 4.

Step 1

The first step involves developing a collaborative classroom learning environment where students feel comfortable engaging in the social practices of learning in the EAL literacy classroom (Santos & Shandor, 2012; Tarone et al., 2009), in communication with one another and the instructor, and with the environmental/technological tools available to mediate learning. For example, establishing expectations, developing consistent classroom routines, and orienting learners to the available resources could increase learners' comfort. To communicate these expectations, routines, and resources to EALLs, students in more advanced classes could create videos that explain and demonstrate the expectations, routines, and resources in their first languages. An example video about online classroom expectations following this sequence could show students logging into an online classroom, verbalizing to themselves, "I should mute my microphone," clicking the mute icon, then reminding themselves, "I should pay attention to the person speaking."

Because literacy practices always occur in a "specific sociocultural context" (Street, 2016, p. 336), the activities in this first step are intended to socialize EALLs into a collaborative classroom context and respect collectivist approaches to goal achievement, which according to DeCapua (2016) may be preferred by students who have limited or interrupted formal education.

Supportive social networks can help students brave challenges that may otherwise feel insurmountable (Usher & Schunk, 2018). In addition, the social modelling of more capable peers can strengthen students' feelings of commitment to achieve goals and standards, as well as enhance their self-efficacy for self-regulation (Bandura, 1997; Zimmerman, 2013).

Step 2

The second step consists of collecting observational data of EALLs' self-regulated strategy use and using this information to inform strategy instruction (see Figure 1 on the next page for an example observation checklist that we developed which is informed by Dörnyei's [2005] five task control categories). A checklist of learners' observed strategy use can guide students to self-awareness, self-diagnosis, and control of their strategy use (Cohen, 2014). Ideally, learner self-reported data of strategy use would also supplement instructor observational data. For example, the checklist we developed that is presented in Figure 1 could be adapted for learner self-reflection/assessment by simplifying the language and changing "Learner can" to "I can."

Step 3

In the third step, instructors model the iterative SRL cycle (Zimmerman, 2013) during task completion through demonstration and thinking-aloud while planning for, monitoring, and evaluating/reflecting on the performance of a language task. This type of explicit guidance and modelling throughout the phases has been found to enhance students' SRL (Mak & Wong, 2018). Teaching EALLs the meaning of "plan," "monitor," and "evaluate" is essential. If possible, solicit the assistance of interpreters/students who are able to translate these words into the students' first languages. Because these terms are abstract, instructors could explain the concepts through a story-telling approach. For example, instructors could tell a story about buying groceries which is a task that is likely familiar to learners:

I need to go to the grocery store. First, I **plan** my shopping trip. I look in my fridge and cupboard to see what I need. Then I make a shopping list. At the store, I **monitor** how I am doing by checking items off my list. I see chips. I want to buy them. I check my list. Chips are not on it. I do not buy them. Before I leave the store, I **evaluate** how I did by checking the things in my cart with my list. I have everything. My shopping trip is successful thanks to my plan and my list.

During subsequent language tasks, instructors can explicitly refer to the phases of the SRL cycle during task completion, as awareness of the phases will aid transfer to other learning tasks (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1998).

Step 4

The fourth step consists of teaching students how to set clear goals and subgoals or short-term goals in relation to specific tasks and the skills/steps required. Instructors could conduct a task analysis activity that involves providing EALLs with an illustrated list of subgoals that may or may not be relevant to the completion of a specific task, then ask students to identify the relevant ones. For example, for the CLB 1 reading task "identify dates and amounts on a pay stub"

(CCLB, 2012, p. 77), relevant subgoals may be *understand what the dollar symbol (\$) means* and *understand aspects of the western calendar (month, day, year)*, whereas an irrelevant subgoal may be *circle the company's address*. Setting optimal goals and subgoals are important SRL strategies that have been found to contribute to sustained motivation and learning mastery (Zimmerman, 2013).

Figure 1

Instructor Observation Checklist of Students' Self-Regulation Strategies



Task control strategy categories	Learner can	Date confirmed
Commitment control strategies	1. set long-term goals.	
	2. set short-term goals.	
	3. set realistic goals.	
	4. set clearly measurable goals. (e.g., "fill-in a job application form" and not "learn English")	
	5. set small self-rewards for attaining goals.	
Metacognitive control strategies	6. identify and control small distractions.	
	7. demonstrate some awareness of time management for a task.	
	8. break a task into steps.	
	9. get started on the first step of the task.	
	10. monitor their concentration on the task.	
Satiation control strategies	11. use a rubric to self-evaluate their task performance.	
	12. approach the task with creativity (e.g., add a personal challenge of using n multisyllabic words).	
	13. identify the relation between classroom tasks and real-life.	
Emotional control strategies	14. state the value of the task for future opportunities. (e.g., "this task will help me to _____")	
	15. recognize their positive emotions that support their learning/task performance.	
	16. recognize their negative emotional reactions (e.g., anxiety, frustration, and/or stressors) that interfere with their learning/task performance.	
	17. use relaxation or meditation techniques to manage disruptive emotions (e.g., stretching, deep breathing, visualizing).	
Environmental control strategies	18. engage in positive self-talk to motivate learning and manage disruptive emotions.	
	19. remember to bring learning material to class (e.g., binder, pencils, glasses).	
	20. manage environmental distractors in the classroom (e.g., use cellphone only for learning purposes).	
	21. ask for help when appropriate.	
	22. use learning tools/resources/reference materials that are available in the classroom.	
	23. position themselves so they can see and hear the teacher.	
	24. engage in learning opportunities outside the classroom.	

Step 5

The fifth step involves providing students with self-monitoring/tracking tools to help them develop awareness of their thoughts, behaviours, attention, emotions, and the learning environment. Monitoring activities can optimize performance by promoting the revision of goals, plans, and strategies during task completion (Hadwin et al., 2018). For example, to encourage students to monitor their attention when completing a language task, students could be provided a list of time intervals (e.g., every 10 minutes) and asked to circle whether they are on-task or off-task. To keep track of their emotions, instructors could present students with an emotional temperature checklist (Figure 2) and have them circle the emoji/word that best captures how they are feeling during a task. When students are completing listening and speaking tasks with partners or in groups, students could be presented with a checklist and asked to circle whether or not they can hear their partners or group members and if they have all the materials needed for task completion. To increase students' awareness of the supports that are available in their immediate learning environment (e.g., a word wall), when EALLs ask for teacher assistance, instructors could first direct their attention to a pictured list of the resources available in the classroom and have students circle the potentially useful one(s). Regular discussions of self-observation checklists/tracking tools with learners can help them recognize the behaviours, thoughts, emotions, and environmental resources that support rather than interfere with their task performance (Stoeger & Ziegler, 2011).

Figure 2

Emotional Temperature Checklist

 happy	 so-so	 worried	 frustrated	 angry
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Step 6

The sixth step involves teaching students strategies to manage/control their thoughts, behaviours, attention, emotions, and environment and to deal with defensive self-reactions (e.g., procrastination, task withdrawal) that may arise when they encounter obstacles as they engage in language learning tasks (see Dörnyei's [2005] control strategy categories and our examples of associated strategies in Figure 1). One way to support students' strategy development is by adding self-regulation strategies to the self-monitoring tools described in Step 5 above. For example, to encourage metacognitive control of attention, "good work—keep going" could be added beside "on-task" and "okay, back to work" could be added beside "off-task." To promote emotion control, instructors could add strategies below the emojis (Figure 3). To foster environmental control of the learning environment, on the checklist beside "can't hear my group members," the directions "move so you can hear them" or "ask them to speak up" could be added; to stimulate students' use of learning resources. On the pictured list instructors could add "find it and use it." Self-monitoring tools that offer strategic actions such as those presented in this step can guide learners towards effective SRL by helping them to manage their defensive reactions (Stoeger & Ziegler, 2011) through the use of SRL control strategies (see Dörnyei, 2005

and Figure 1) that “focus on what they can control rather than on what they cannot” (Usher & Schunk, 2018, p. 33).

Figure 3

Emotional Temperature Checklist With Strategies

				
happy	so-so	worried	frustrated	angry
Enjoy the task.	Breathe in and relax; Breathe out and smile. Carry on.	Focus on what you can do, not what you can't do.	Repeat "I can do it!"	Count to ten and take deep breaths.

Step 7

The seventh step involves building EALLs' self-efficacy (i.e., the belief in their ability to achieve goals/accomplish tasks/learn) by providing them with credible praise and encouragement (“You can do this”) and ongoing feedback on their effort, the appropriateness of the strategies that they employ to meet their goals, and their achievement of goal(s) and subgoals. For each task, instructors could demonstrate how to break down the task into a manageable number of achievable steps/subgoals, write the steps on the classroom whiteboard, and then provide students with a simplified checklist of the steps/subgoals. As students work through the task, they could be asked to check off and celebrate their progress as they complete each of the steps/subgoals (see example rewards in Step 8 below). Because “students’ capabilities to self-regulate depend significantly on their self-efficacy beliefs” (Zimmerman et al., 2017, p. 313), and teachers’ feedback, encouragement, and modelling of SRL can increase students’ self-efficacy, effort, and commitment to achieve their goals (Usher & Schunk, 2018), the activities in this step have the potential to foster EALLs’ SRL.

Step 8

In the eighth step, instructors could encourage EALLs to reward themselves for their goal completion. For example, rewards could range from small gestures such as asking students to give themselves a pat on the back or a self high-five, to larger actions such as allowing students the freedom to reward themselves with a snack, a walk around the classroom, or a tea/coffee break when they achieve a (sub)goal. Self-rewards have been found “to be more effective motivators than external rewards” as they help students adhere to their plans for accomplishing their goals (Usher & Schunk, 2018, p. 28).

Step 9

In the ninth step, instructors support students to select and coordinate the use of both metastrategies and specific language learning strategies in the cognitive, motivational, social, and affective domains that are appropriate for each task (Oxford, 2017). For EALLs, instruction in metastrategies and cognitive reading strategies is particularly important given their unique

learning needs. During a task such as reading a COVID-19 poster for information to protect oneself and others from getting sick, examples of reading strategies include the following:

- taking a poster walk while paying attention to pictures (e.g., a person sneezing in their elbow) and enhanced textual features (e.g., bold/larger font which signify importance)
- making a prediction (“what is the poster about?”)
- telling a partner what you know or want to know about COVID-19
- brainstorming with a partner words related to the pictures or bold print, then trying to find and underline those words in the poster
- circling words or phrases on the poster that you know
- touching the words as you read
- searching for unknown words on Google Images
- trying to sound out words that you don’t recognize
- underlining *do not* and *don’t*

Because literacy learners tend to rely on semantic processing strategies—focusing on meaning with little or no attention to form (Bigelow et al., 2006), it would be beneficial to emphasize phonological (e.g., recognizing words that begin with the same sound) and morphosyntactic strategies (e.g., recognizing the grammatical functions of word parts), as these strategies are particularly helpful for learning to read and write in English. Zimmerman et al. (2017) suggested that in addition to instruction in how to use strategies appropriately, emergent readers require instruction designed to increase their awareness of the value of SRL strategies. It is likely that instruction in strategies such as those identified in this step will promote greater success in reading and, in turn, increase the value EALLs place on both SRL/metastrategies and reading strategies.

Step 10

The tenth step consists of guiding students’ self-reflections on their task-performance and SRL/metastrategy use. Then students could be asked to link the reflections back to their initial goals and set new goals when their previous goals have been met. For example, after completing a task, instructors could assist EALLs with self-reflection by creating a checklist that includes specific SRL strategies which instructors modelled/taught/observed students using in class. Instructors could also pose some of the following questions to guide students’ self-reflections; however, first language support will likely be necessary:

- What can I do now that I couldn’t do before?
- What is one thing I would change if I were to do the task again?
- What did I learn? Why is it important?
- Why was I successful or not? (e.g., I was successful because (a) I followed the instructions; (b) I managed my time appropriately by spending enough time completing each of the task’s subgoals; (c) I used strategies to help me when I ran into problems; (d) I coped with my emotions/frustrations in a positive way).

Other questions that students could reflect upon to compare their task performance to their goals include:

- Did I achieve any of my English learning goals? If yes, which one(s)?
- What did I do to achieve my goal(s)?
- What are my new goals?

Students' reflections on their strategy use and learning can promote the conscious examination of their behaviours (Oxford, 2017), which can then be used to optimize their reactions to learning and inform the next SRL cycle (Zimmerman, 2013). Once EALLs become familiar with the SRL cycle and are able to use SRL strategies appropriately, to encourage them to become self-regulated strategy users, instructors need to gradually remove the teacher-generated scaffolding and remind the learners to select and use these strategies on their own in the future.

Conclusion

The goal of SRL instruction is for students to internalize how to self-regulate their learning through the selection and use of appropriate strategies for planning, monitoring and evaluating their thoughts, behaviours, emotions, motivation, and their learning environment. SRL strategies help students organize their learning and promote greater independence, confidence, and success as they learn to complete language tasks in formal learning environments such as those found in LINC classes in British Columbia. The research-informed instructional sequence and example tools and activities described in this paper can provide EALLs with opportunities to develop formal SRL strategies that have the potential to enhance their learning in the EAL literacy classroom.

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