THE IMPACT OF SELF-REGULATION STRATEGIES ON THE LEARNING PROCESS OF YOUNG ENGLISH LEARNERS

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by
Camillea C. A. Johnson
Summer 2015
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ON THE LEARNING PROCESS OF YOUNG
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my husband, Aaron, and my family in my hometown. Thank you for believing that I could accomplish this goal for myself long after I had given up on it.

This work is also dedicated to Wendy Crist, my mentor teacher in the RTR Program. I am so grateful for the way you opened your classroom to me, showing with not just words, but actions as well, that the class was truly ours. You helped me gain confidence in my teaching abilities, and daily validated my teacher voice.
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ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF SELF-REGULATION STRATEGIES ON THE LEARNING PROCESS OF YOUNG ENGLISH LEARNERS

by

Camillea C. A. Johnson

Master of Arts in Education

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As the number of young English Learners in the California school system continues to rise, it is critical that educators stay current on the best strategies for helping these students successfully access curriculum. One aspect of helping English Learners achieve academic success is to guide them into becoming more aware of their own learning needs, an important and necessary step on the path to becoming an advocate for one’s own learning process. A method of helping students take that step is the teaching of strategies that lend themselves to self-regulation, a process of trial, error, and much reflection on one’s own thinking and learning needs.

The primary purpose of this action research project was to explicitly teach self-regulation strategies to English Learners in a third-grade setting and examine any changes this made in both student work and how student work was approached. Another aim of the project was to see to what extent third grade English Learners would be able to
demonstrate their thinking about their own learning process. As part of the action research project, students were explicitly taught an array of self-regulation strategies, given numerous opportunities to practice the strategies that most appealed to them, and then asked to demonstrate their thinking, in a variety of methods, about the strategies they trialed.

Previous research done on self-regulation overwhelmingly shows a positive link between self-regulation and academic achievement. However, little research currently exists specifically on English Learners using self-regulation strategies, and even fewer studies focus on students as young as nine years old or so. While it is hoped that this project will add to the body of knowledge on this topic, it must also be stated that this research was conducted under a very specific set of circumstances that may not be applicable to situations outside the scope of this study.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

The context for my action research is a third grade general education classroom in a rural elementary school. Of the twenty students that I teach alongside my co-teacher, three are English Learners. During a daily thirty minute instruction period for English Learners exclusively, I teach these three students as well as three other English Learners from another third grade classroom. These students quickly drew my interest as I began the school year. I soon noticed that while many of the students from culturally diverse backgrounds did not seem to be listening or engaged during activities such as teacher read-alouds, the same students were often able to answer questions when called upon. This made me curious about the effect culture has on what student engagement looks like. After thinking about how my mentor teacher and I responded to students when we thought they were not listening, I also wondered how other teachers react when students do not meet teacher expectations for how student engagement should look. What are those expectations and what assumptions help determine them?

While I remained curious about those expectations and assumptions, I wanted to come up with a question that would cause me to think about my own practice with EL students rather than that of other teachers. What could I do that would in some way benefit this group of students? This caused me to look for common areas of need demonstrated by the EL students in my class. I noted that most academic tasks not only took longer for these students to complete, it took longer for them to even begin the tasks.
While other students would seek help and ask clarification questions when a task was unclear, the EL students typically waited…and waited. What were they waiting for? For the directions to be restated? For a teacher to walk over and give individual help? For other students to finish so that the whole class would move on to another subject? As more questions emerged for me while I continued to observe the students, I knew that this would be my focus area for action research.

Statement of the Problem

The question my action research would primarily strive to answer was: How will my instruction of self-regulating strategies impact English Learners’ ability to monitor their own learning? This question arose from observations of the actions of my English Learners. If students routinely have difficulty beginning a task, I wondered what strategies they can be taught to utilize on their own in order to take charge of the learning process. Other questions action research data may answer include: How useful is instruction of self-regulating strategies during English Learner only instruction? How useful is instruction of these strategies for English Learners during whole class instruction? Are the strategies beneficial for the English proficient students in the class? What are the best methods of communicating with each English Learner about their progress in using the strategies? How does the instruction impact how often students ask for help or modifications to the environment of the classroom? And does the instruction of the strategies decrease the amount of time it takes English Learners to begin a task after it is given?

These questions reflect my philosophy as an educator. The first thing that always comes to mind when asked about my philosophy of education is a firm conviction that
every student is capable of learning. This belief certainly does not exclude my English
Learners. When students come to my class, they are coming from a variety of home lives
and backgrounds, cultural heritages and languages, socioeconomic statuses and abilities.
Not one of these factors should give me reason to think that a student will be
unsuccessful. The mental expectations I set for my students will be communicated to
them through the things that I say and do, as well as through the things that I do not say
and do. All students are deserving of a teacher who wholeheartedly believes that,
regardless of diverse backgrounds, students have the ability to learn.

Another of my core beliefs is that diversity is one of the greatest gifts to me as an
educator because the strategies that best meet the needs of students with special needs or
English Learners are strategies that make learning more rich for all students. It may take
more effort on my part to meet the needs of students with special needs or English
Learners, but that effort is well worth it, especially since all students in my class can
benefit. As such, the strategies I teach the English Learners to help them monitor their
own learning will be taught to all students in my class.

My philosophy is also mirrored in my question through the reflective aspect of the
question. If I truly want to meet the needs of my students, I must be willing to
continuously examine myself, my thoughts, my interactions with students, my teaching
practices, and student reactions to all of these. While examining my thoughts, I need to
look for and root out any subconscious biases and stereotypes that are often spread in
dominant culture by becoming more familiar with the cultures and home lives from
where my students are coming from. Only then can I look at each student without any
preconceived notions or judgments about their ability to be successful in school and life beyond.

Just as I believe all students are capable of learning, I believe that it is my job as an educator to never stop learning. Education is not a stagnant field; it is constantly evolving as teaching practices are researched and proclaimed either evidenced based or detrimental to students, and new legislation, policies, and standards are set into place at federal, state-wide, and district levels. These changes require that I too evolve, keeping myself informed about the current trends in education, the methods of teaching and mental attitudes that will best help meet the needs of my students, and the actions that will form strong collaborative relationships with parents and other professionals in the field. As I introduce new practices into my classroom, I will also be communicating my love of learning to students, aiding me in my quest to help students become aware that they too are capable of learning and loving it.

Purpose of the Study

While research abounds in the area of learning to monitor one’s own learning, much of the research that focuses on this area with students is done with junior high through college age students. Few studies exist specifically focusing on primary grade English Learners becoming more aware of their own learning needs and thinking about the ways that they can address those needs. The data collected in these few studies was not done with the rural population in my current district. The majority of these studies were conducted by researchers outside of classrooms, which may lead to a different perspective of the data than the emic perspective a teacher would have. The research I conduct will be from within the classroom, allowing me to add to the few existing teacher
accounts available in this community of practice.

The study I will conduct may not make an impact outside of the district, but teachers at this school site and others in the district have voiced similar concerns about their English Learners. Research shows that English Learners have “lower levels of academic achievement and higher rates of poverty, mobility, and high school non-completion than students proficient in English” (LeClair, Doll, Osborn, & Jones, 2009, p. 568). Self-regulated learning has been linked to high academic achievement, a positive view of one’s self-efficacy, and high motivation (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990; Wang & Pape, 2004; Zimmerman, 1990). If this study shows that instruction in self-regulated learning does in fact help English Learners to become more active in their learning process, teachers and their students in my immediate area can be beneficiaries. Any materials I create to help my students reflect about their use of self-regulated strategies can be shared with others.

Theoretical Bases and Organization

Three main theoretical bases for this study exist. The first is that of care ethics. A key theorist in the conversation around care ethics is Noddings (1998). Care ethics, or relational ethics, are described as a relation, “any pairing or connection of individuals characterized by some affective awareness in each” (Noddings, 1998, p. 177). For teachers and individual students, this connection is essential in creating an environment in which the student is made aware of the high expectations of his/her teacher. The connection also allows for the development of trust between teachers and students. The objective of care ethics at work in a classroom is to “develop a caring community through
modeling, dialogue, and practice,” encouraging students to work with and support one another (Noddings, 1998, p. 179).

While I believe caring relationships should always be established as early as possible in my classroom, I have chosen to focus on it specifically for this study. I will be asking students to be highly reflective, thinking about their own learning and areas of need. I will also be asking them to reflect on the degree to which the strategies I introduce them to are useful in helping them meet the learning needs they identify. What I am ultimately asking of my students is that they consider modifying something about their personal learning process. To do this without first establishing trusting relationships may cause the students to be leery of even trying the strategies. The students need to be comfortable with me, aware that I have high expectations of them and value their work. They also need to be willing to share their thinking about their own learning with me and one another. Care ethics provides a model for me of the context in which I want to explore some new patterns of thinking with my students.

The second base for the study is English Learner instruction. The dominant theory driving instruction for English Learners is that of “communicative language teaching,” which must take place in a social context through interactions with peers (Saunders & Goldenberg, 2010, p. 22). Citing Krashen (1982), Saunders and Goldenberg (2010) state that this theory views second language acquisition as a social process, developed primarily through “meaningful interactions with others” (p. 22). Research shows that the “speed at which learners progress varies greatly and may depend on factors such as age, motivation, exposure to input, and learning style” (Snow & Katz, 2010, p. 90). As such, Snow and Katz (2010) state that teachers should match the delivery of instruction and
types of assessments to their English Learners varied proficiency levels. Echevarria, Vogt, and Short (2010) describe a variety of practices teachers should engage in while planning for, teaching, and assessing lessons in classes with English Learners in order to facilitate those necessary meaningful interactions. Three of these practices include providing clear instructions, using scaffolding techniques, and giving the students many opportunities to discuss the concepts at hand.

An understanding of the process of how second languages are acquired as well as specific practices in order to support that process is critical in my classroom and this study. If I do not present the strategies I wish the students to experiment with in ways that meet their needs as English Learners, I may cheat them out of the thinking that the strategies could allow them to engage in. I need to be aware of the varied levels of English proficiency in my class, tailoring instruction and conversations to maximize areas of strength while supporting areas for growth.

I see these first two theoretical bases, care ethics and English Learner instruction, operating well together. As I endeavor to meet the objective of care ethics by working with students to create a supportive environment in which we can practice with new concepts and exchange ideas, the language demands placed on English Learners will be supported. By building trusting relationships with all students, those who are English Learners will also be aware that I value them, their learning, and their work. The new strategies I will ask them to work with will be scaffolded in a classroom that invites students to openly voice their thoughts and experiences with those strategies.

The third theoretical base for this study is self-regulated learning. Self-regulated learning is the self-governed thoughts, emotions, and actions that are used for the purpose
of reaching personal goals (Zimmerman, 2000, as cited in Wang & Pape, 2004). The self-regulating strategies that I will be asking the students to use and evaluate are intended to help students acquire the three features of self-regulated learning: the connection between planning for success and being successful; the management of the learning environment and effort given to academic tasks; and finally, monitoring of the effectiveness of certain strategies. Through self-regulated learning, I hope to give the English Learners a way to monitor their learning in order to take steps on their own to have their learning needs met.

Limitations of the Study

The very factors that justify the existence of the study may also be considered limitations. The study will be conducted in one classroom, with a low student to teacher ratio, causing the sample size to be small. The data will be based on students from an impoverished rural area in an underperforming school. The self-regulated learning strategies will be taught both in the whole class setting, with all students present, and to English Learners alone during English Learners only instruction. This information may not be relevant for teachers and students in districts that differ in any way from the above description.

Definition of Terms

Self-Regulated Learning

Self-regulated learning is defined as the self-governed thoughts, emotions, and actions that are planned and routinely adapted for the purpose of reaching personal objectives (Zimmerman, 2000, as cited in Wang & Pape, 2004). It is comprised of three key features. First, self-regulated learners are aware that there is a connection between
strategic planning and academic success (Zimmerman, 1990). Second, self-regulated learners take measures to manage the effort given academic tasks (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990). Third, self-regulated learners monitor “the effectiveness of their learning methods or strategies and react to this feedback in a variety of ways” (Zimmerman, 1990, p. 5).

**English Learners (ELs)**

According to the California Department of Education (2010), English Learners (ELs) refers to students whose primary home language is not English. These students have been identified as being less than proficient in their use of English in the areas of listening, speaking, writing, and reading as measured by the California English Language Development Test (CELDT).
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

English Learners (ELs) are a rapidly growing population of students in the United States. In California alone, nearly 1.5 million ELs attend public schools (California Department of Education, 2010). Despite these figures, only one-fourth of the teachers in public schools who provide instruction for ELs have had training to meet the diverse needs of this subgroup (Wang & Pape, 2004). ELs have “lower levels of academic achievement and higher rates of poverty, mobility, and high school non-completion than students proficient in English” (LeClair, Doll, Osborn, & Jones, 2009, p. 568). In addition, ELs are “more likely to attend underperforming schools and are disproportionately represented in referrals for special education services” to their English speaking counterparts (LeClair et al., 2009, p. 586). Taken together, these data demonstrate a compelling argument for educators to become more aware of the needs of English Learners and the instructional practices that will best meet those needs.

While the need for educators to become informed about ELs is evident, the purpose of this literature review is to examine current research in the area of helping ELs in primary elementary grades to become more aware of their own learning needs. In determining which instructional practices would best guide ELs into monitoring their learning, the process of self-regulated learning has proven worthy of investigation. Kitsantas, Steen, and Huie (2009) state that several studies show that a connection between self-regulated strategies and academic success for elementary school students
exists. Furthermore, self-regulated learning has been linked to a positive view of one’s self-efficacy and high motivation (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990; Wang & Pape, 2004; Zimmerman, 1990). This review will first seek to report the main features of self-regulated learning before discussing the manner in which students attempt to regulate learning behavior. A limited number of studies have been done with ELs specifically relating to self-regulated learning; however, research that applies to students in general and ELs whenever possible will be woven into the discussion.

Self-Regulated Learning

Self-regulated learning will be defined here as self-governed thoughts, emotions, and actions that are planned and routinely adapted for the purpose of reaching personal objectives (Zimmerman, 2000, as cited in Wang & Pape, 2004). Rooted in a social cognitive perspective, self-regulated learning is comprised of three key features. First, self-regulated learners are aware that there is a connection between strategic planning and academic success (Zimmerman, 1990). These students recognize that metacognitive strategies can impact their learning outcomes. Second, self-regulated learners take measures to manage the effort given academic tasks (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990). This group of students will eliminate any obstacles that may distract attention from pursuit of the goal in mind. Third, self-regulated learners monitor “the effectiveness of their learning methods or strategies and react to this feedback in a variety of ways” (Zimmerman, 1990, p. 5). As students try new strategies, they note which ones are most likely to aid in the attainment of academic goals, abandoning the strategies that do not seem practical for this purpose. This third component of self-regulated learning points to the cyclic process students must engage in to regulate their learning.
Self-regulated learning also involves the interdependence of personal, behavioral, and environmental processes (Bandura, 1986, as cited in Wang & Chang, 2004). Bandura (1977b) refers to this as “triadic reciprocal determinism” (as cited in Zimmerman, 1990). Reciprocal determinism accounts for student behavior as influenced by social factors and the students’ views of self, while at the same time influencing the social environment and view of self. Zimmerman (1990) states that the triadic processes are “viewable as separable yet interdependent sources of influence in analyses of human functioning” (p. 180). For the purpose of describing relevant research for students in general and ELs whenever possible, this literature review will discuss the three processes separately.

Triadic Reciprocal Determinism: Person

According to Zimmerman (1990), the person, or self, is comprised of “covert cognitive beliefs, such as self-efficacy, and self-regulative knowledge, and affective processes such as anxiety” (p. 180). Bandura (1977b) views the recognition of the person as critical, claiming that this part of triadic reciprocal determinism explains why human behavior is more complex than individuals merely “reacting to independent environmental events” (as cited in Zimmerman, 1990, p. 180). The beliefs and affective processes of an individual are carried into any environment encountered and are reflected in the outward behavior of the individual. While it is impossible to know the beliefs and emotions of every student entering a classroom, examining some of the beliefs and emotions at play in student self-efficacy, motivation, and ability to set goals are important steps towards understanding the behaviors that occur in the classroom environment.
Self-efficacy

Bandura and Schunk (1981) define self-efficacy as “judgments about how well one can organize and execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations containing many ambiguous, unpredictable, and often stressful elements” (p. 587). Student perceptions of their ability to accomplish an academic task are influenced in part by past experience with similar tasks (Wang & Pape, 2004). Those who believe themselves as capable of handling certain tasks will find it easier to accomplish the tasks, while students who do not feel capable will have a harder time succeeding (Bandura, 1989). Student judgments of his/her own efficacy “influence the types of anticipatory scenarios they construct and reiterate” (Bandura, 1989, p. 1176). Students who have a positive view of their efficacy will visualize themselves successfully handling various situations, while those with low efficacy will see themselves failing situations before even attempting them. According to Bandura (1989), these visualizations are indicators of future actions on the part of the students.

After conducting case studies on four EL students in order to determine what relationship existed between an EL student’s self-efficacy and academic achievement, Huang and Chang (1996) describe conclusions drawn from the study results. First, Huang and Chang (1996) note that a student’s perception of his or her own ability to achieve a task did correlate with the student’s achievement. The EL students with higher academic achievements were those who had been deemed as having high self-efficacy, as measured by questionnaires and interviews. Second, “the interests in the topics influence the participants’ self-efficacy” (Huang & Chang, 1996, p. 17). The efforts of the students increased for tasks in which they were interested. A third influence on self-efficacy was
the role of student perceptions on teacher impressions of the students’ abilities. Huang and Chang (1996) found that when the students perceived their teacher as supportive, student beliefs about their abilities improved. Fourth, factors such as “learner’s performance, the comparison to other learners, the complexity of the task, and the efforts put on the task” were also shown to have an impact on self-efficacy (Huang & Chang, 1996, p. 18). While students’ beliefs about their ability to achieve the task and the task itself were the dominant factors in the academic success of these EL students, environmental factors such as the teacher and other students also had an impact. These environmental factors will be explored later on in this review.

Motivation

Motivation, as Bandura (1989) notes, is connected to self-efficacy. Students’ beliefs about their abilities to achieve a task are directly related “in how much effort they will exert in an endeavor and how long they will persevere in the face of obstacles” (p. 1176). Pintrich and De Groot (1990) propose a model for motivation that is comprised of three components. The first is an “expectancy component,” in which students ask themselves if they can accomplish the task (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990, p. 33). This first component is synonymous with self-efficacy. The second component is that of value. The students’ interests for the task are encompassed in this element, as well as the answer to the question, “Why am I doing this task?” (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990, p. 34). When a reason, a purpose, for the task is given and found acceptable to students, motivation to accomplish the task is higher than when the purpose of the task is either unclear or uninteresting to students. The third component of motivation is an affective one, involving the reactions of students to the task. Pintrich and De Groot (1990) state that
while emotions such as pride or fear may be significant, in a school environment, “the most important seems to be text anxiety” (p. 34). Pintrich and De Groot (1990) suggest that these three components of motivation are positively connected with self-regulated learning and student achievement.

**Goal Setting**

Effective goal setting is a process engaged in by students with high self-efficacy and motivation (Zimmerman, 1990). However, Zimmerman (1990) also states that students “displaying gross deficits and low motivation…improved their performance when they set proximal goals for themselves” (p. 181). When students set goals that are short term, they are more motivated to continue working and acquire more skills than students who set goals that are long-term (Zimmerman, 1990). Kitsantas, Steen, and Huie (2009) separate goal orientation into two categories: mastery goals and performance goals (p. 67). Students with mastery oriented goals are described as those who “strive to gain understanding of a concept,” while students with performance oriented goals “aim to outperform their peers and display their competence” (Ames, 1992, as cited in Kitsantas et al., 2009, p. 67). Students with mastery goals use self-regulated learning strategies more effectively while “performance oriented students are found to engage in less achievement-supporting behaviors and strategies” (Kitsantas et al., 2009, p. 67).

Moreover, students whose goals are primarily performance driven are more likely to fall into patterns such as learned helplessness, a trait Huang and Chang (1996) noted in their study on four EL students.
Triadic Reciprocal Determinism: Environment

While the person, and all he or she carries internally, is perhaps the most crucial part of the process of self-regulation, Zimmerman (1990) speaks of the impact an environment can have on the person. Self-regulatory responses are dependent “on a variety of social-context factors, such as modeling and response outcomes” (Zimmerman, 1990, p. 184). In the context of a classroom, factors to consider are relationships between students, their peers, and their teachers, the types of instruction offered, and the manner in which the instruction is given. As mentioned earlier, Huang and Chang (1996) found that the self-efficacy beliefs of EL students were impacted by many environmental factors, including whether the students felt supported by their teacher, how the instruction was presented, how the students measured themselves against other students in the class, and the complexity of the task at hand.

Care Ethics

Noddings (1998) defines care ethics as relational ethics, a relation being “any pairing or connection of individuals characterized by some affective awareness in each” (p. 177). When thinking about the relationship between a teacher and one student, the teacher’s role is one of caring and complete focus on the student during an interaction in order to meet the student’s needs. The student’s role is to recognize the teacher’s caring attention and respond. Communication between the partners is essential for the development of trust. This is especially true during interactions in which the teacher provides “confirmation” for the student, encouragement offered by speaking to the strengths, improvements on areas of weakness, and talents the teacher sees in the student (Noddings, 1998, p. 179). While the teacher is actively pursuing caring interactions with
each student, he or she is also shaping the atmosphere of the whole class. Noddings (1998) states that the teacher’s objective should be to “develop a caring community through modeling, dialogue, and practice,” encouraging students to work with and support one another (p. 179).

Several studies show the impact of a caring environment on the academic achievement of ELs. One study examined the differences in EL and non-EL students’ perceptions of belonging in school. Morrison, Cosden, O’Farrell, and Campos (2003) defined belonging as “the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school social environment” (as cited in Le Clair et al., 2009, p. 570). Morrison et al. (2003) discovered that ELs had lower perceptions of belonging than non-EL students. Another study, conducted by Fletcher, Bos, and Johnson (1999) compared teacher practices in bilingual education and general education classes with ELs present. They determined that ELs’ academic achievement increased when classrooms have “positive and cooperative learning environments” (as cited in Le Clair et al., 2009, p. 570). In a third example, Gillanders (2007) completed a case study on a classroom containing both EL and non-EL students. Gillanders (2007) discovered that a strong teacher-student relationship increased the ELs “social status and vocabulary skills,” (as cited in Le Clair et al., 2009, p. 570). Le Clair et al. (2009) suggest these studies show that “supportive classroom environments, characterized by positive and collaborative interactions with peers and teachers, are important to EL students’ academic performance” (p. 570).
English Learner Instruction

The ways in which instruction is presented to EL students has an impact on their perceptions of whether they can be successful academically (Huang & Chang, 1996). According to Saunders and Goldenberg (2010), the dominant theory driving instruction for ELs is that of “communicative language teaching” (p. 22). Two key features of communicative language teaching exist. First, the aim “of second-language education is to develop learners’ communicative competence” (Saunders & Goldenberg, 2010, p. 22). Second, “communication is both a goal and means for developing language” (p. 22).

Citing Krashen (1982), Saunders and Goldenberg (2010) state that this theory views second language acquisition as a social process, developed primarily through “meaningful interactions with others” (p. 22).

While a variety of programs and curriculums exist for the purpose of supporting ELs as they acquire English, Snow and Katz (2010) describe features of which the teachers of such programs should be aware. First, the varied backgrounds and English proficiency of the students should be recognized. ELs are to be “grouped according to English language proficiency levels…beginning to advanced” as identified by CELDT, the California English Language Development Test (Snow & Katz, 2010, p. 85). Second, as students acquire a second language, there are “developmental stages” which they will go through, similar to the stages children go through when they acquire their primary language (Snow & Katz, 2010, p. 90). Research shows that the “speed at which learners progress varies greatly and may depend on factors such as age, motivation, exposure to input, and learning style” (Snow & Katz, 2010, p. 90). As such, Snow and Katz (2010) state that teachers should match the delivery of instruction and types of assessments to
their ELs varied proficiency levels. Third, although some may feel that young children learn languages easier than adults, current research in second language acquisition shows that children do not necessarily have such an advantage. Thus, teachers “should not underestimate the task at hand for young English Learners” (Snow & Katz, 2010, p. 92).

Echevarria, Vogt, and Short (2010) describe a variety of practices teachers should engage in while planning for, teaching, and assessing lessons in classes with ELs. Three of these practices seem especially pertinent for classrooms that emphasize environments supportive of English Learners. The first is that all tasks should be clearly explained. Echevarria et al. (2010) state that “English Learners at all levels perform better in academic situations when the teacher gives clear instructions for assignments and activities” (p. 83). Instructions should be explicit, given step by step, and modeled by the teacher. Samples of the work, such as paragraphs and graphic organizers, should be shown prior to the start of the task (Echevarria et al., 2010).

A second practice is the use of scaffolding techniques. Scaffolding is associated with the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), fathered by Vygotsky (1978). The ZPD “is the difference between what a child can accomplish alone and what he or she can accomplish with the assistance of a more experienced individual” (Echevarria et al., 2010, p. 102). When concepts are introduced, teachers scaffold instruction by offering “substantial amounts of support and assistance” initially before gradually allowing students to take more responsibility as they become competent through many chances to practice the concepts (Vacca, 2002, as cited by Echevarria et al., 2010, p. 102). There are three types of scaffolding, verbal, procedural and instructional. Verbal scaffolding includes techniques such as “paraphrasing, think-alouds, slowing speech, increasing
pauses, and speaking in phrases” (Echevarria et al., 2010, p. 103). Procedural techniques include “one-on-one teaching, small group instruction, and partnering or grouping of students” (Echevarria et al., 2010, p. 104). Finally, instructional scaffolding is the use of tools such as graphic organizers, which cue students about the structure of the content being presented.

The third practice teachers can use in order to create supportive learning environments is to provide “frequent opportunities for interaction and discussion” (Echevarria et al., 2010, p. 123). This practice is key in building rapport between teachers and students, as well as students with their peers. It also “encourages elaborated responses from students when discussing the lesson’s concepts” (Echevarria et al., 2010, p. 125). As students begin sharing their understandings, teachers can prompt detailed explanations and higher order thinking with questions such as “Why is that important?” (Echevarria et al., 2010, p. 125). A final consideration for this practice is that it helps to balance the “talk” in the classroom. As Echevarria et al. (2010) note, the bulk of speech used in a classroom is often on the part of the teacher, limiting students’ opportunities to cement new concepts for themselves through discourse.

Triadic Reciprocal Determinism: Behavior

The third independent process is the observable behavior of an individual (Zimmerman, 1990). The first two described processes, the person and the environment, contribute to behavior. However, as noted by Zimmerman (1990), these processes are interdependent because of the impact one can have on the other two areas. The behavior a person exhibits can result in changes in the environment, as well as changes in the cognitive beliefs the person has. For example, research noted earlier shows that students’
beliefs about their abilities to complete a task will affect the outcomes of the task, as will the environment in which the task takes place. However, once the task is over, students’ beliefs about their abilities to accomplish similar tasks may shift.

Characteristics of Successful English Learners

Wang and Pape (2004) describe several behaviors typically seen in successful ELs. First, successful EL students “are concerned primarily with learning how to communicate” (Wang & Pape, 2004, p. 3). To this end, rather than relying on others, thriving EL students take ownership of their learning. Second, successful ELs employ “strategies appropriate to [their] own personality, age, sex, purpose, and learning context,” demonstrating an awareness of their own abilities and surroundings (Wang & Pape, 2004, p. 3). Wang and Pape (2004) describe the strategies as those used for both learning and communication, including “metacognitive strategies such as self-management, advance preparation, and self-monitoring,” as well as “contextualization and imagery” (p. 4). Third, these ELs take risks and make guesses, showing a belief that the possibility of being wrong is worth an opportunity for growth. Wang and Pape (2004) state that these characteristics “are similar to descriptions of self-regulated learners who are described as active participants in the learning process” (p. 4).

Self-Regulation Strategies

Much of the research for self-regulation focuses on its cyclic nature as a person uses a strategy, evaluates the effectiveness of the strategy, and determines whether the strategy is capable of helping achieve academic goals. However, other than the traits similar to metacognition, little research was found with the actual self-regulating strategies listed. A review of several teacher-created websites revealed trends in the types of self-regulation
strategies taught in some classrooms. In an online module about self-regulation, the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented (GRCGT) lists three categories in which these various self-regulating strategies fall: personal, behavioral, and environmental. Personal strategies have to do with “how a student organizes and interprets information” (n.d.). This includes tactics such as making flash cards, taking notes, graphic organizers, and highlighting. Time management and goal setting are also a part of this category. Students who have difficulty focusing on a task or paying attention are encouraged to teach themselves to manage their time, asking for a timer in order to increase productivity. Some teachers also encourage students to set short term goals for themselves, such as completing a routine assignment three minutes faster the next day.

The second category, behavioral, involves the “actions that the student takes” (n.d.). The strategies in this category, the least discussed in teacher websites, include self-evaluating strategies such as “task analysis” and “attentiveness,” as well as “self-reinforcement,” according to the GRCGT. The environmental category includes the strategy teacher created websites most frequently listed, seeking assistance, from either the teacher or peers. This includes asking for help, asking for directions to be restated, asking for examples of acceptable work, and asking clarification questions. This category also includes strategies that help students monitor their surroundings, such as noting distractions, small font, or inadequate lighting in order to seek solutions.

Future Research

An abundance of research exists on self-regulated learning. Perhaps even more research exists on effective practices for English Learner instruction. However, little research was found combining these two areas. Given the academic achievement
associated with self-regulated learning, it seems that a program emphasizing self-regulating strategies would benefit ELs and native speakers alike, but few studies currently support that notion. Teachers who have incorporated instruction in strategies such as these for their ELs have much to contribute to the field.

Another area for future research is that of the specific self-regulated strategies mentioned here. Scholarly sources speaking to the effectiveness of certain strategies elaborated on broader concepts such as monitoring one’s learning. How would an elementary student, EL or not, learn how to monitor his or her learning? What techniques could a teacher instruct and model in order for students to acquire that strategy? Studies on the effectiveness of more specific strategies, such as those discovered on teacher-created websites and blogs, might increase the likelihood that self-regulated learning would be incorporated to more curriculum for classrooms.

Conclusion

Self-regulation has a positive correlation to academic success and the way students view their own abilities. However, for students whose prior experiences and classroom environments have led to lowered self-efficacy, it cannot be expected that a desire to employ self-regulated strategies would intrinsically occur. Research shows that English Learners often experience various environmental classroom factors that can lead to a negative cycle of lowered self-expectations and efficacy. Research also shows that teachers can have a pivotal role in breaking that cycle.

A teacher who recognizes the potential of self-regulation for giving ELs more ownership of their own learning can help these students achieve that potential. Caring relationships in which all students are left in no doubt of the high expectations their
teacher has of them is perhaps the most important step. Closely related is a supportive learning environment in which students are shown how to encourage and assist one another. The self-regulated strategies the teacher wishes ELs to eventually generalize to situations beyond the teacher’s control should be explicitly taught, verbally and visually explained step by step and modeled in various ways by the teacher. The students ought to have many opportunities to practice the strategies with heavy scaffolding at first and fewer supports as the students become more proficient in the use of the strategies. Finally, students should be encouraged to discuss their progress with the strategies in depth with their teacher and one another, moving beyond simple answers to a solid understanding of which strategies best meet their own learning needs.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The focus of this study originated from observations of the way English Learners in my classroom typically approached academic tasks. As the students routinely sat at their desks and did not attempt the tasks for several minutes, my curiosity about this process grew. Moreover, I began to question my teaching practices, attempting to identify actions or words on my part that may cause confusion for the students about the tasks. As my mentor and I began to reflect on the way we deliver instruction, I started to wonder what the students themselves could do differently when faced with daunting academic tasks. The action research conducted centered on any changes in the way English Learners approach learning resulting from explicit instruction in self-regulating strategies.

The purpose of this study was to help the English Learners in my class become more aware of their own learning needs in order to identify for themselves steps they could take to meet those needs. While I saw it as my role to guide my students in their acquisition of knowledge, it was my hope that through instruction in self-regulating strategies, the students would have a more active role, more ownership, in that process of learning. The data collected during the action research provides insight into the ways in which this aim was, and was not, achieved.
Design of Investigation

When designing this investigation, my first step was to establish the purpose of the study in the form of a question. My guiding research question was “How will my instruction of self-regulating strategies impact English Learners’ ability to monitor their own learning?” With this question in mind, I was then able to develop an action plan, outlining my initial ideas of how to implement instruction on self-regulated learning. These ideas included the theory of care ethics and dominant trends in English Learner Instruction. Care ethics was deemed important because it would allow me to create trusting relationships with students, while becoming aware of the unique needs of English Learners would allow me to better tailor instruction in order for it to be comprehensible to English Learners.

The action plan also encompassed the two main ways I would teach the students to use the strategies. The first was during the English Learner Only instruction. During this daily thirty minute time period, I provided scaffolding and supplemental materials in order for the students to have more opportunities to practice with the main concepts from the core reading curriculum, such as reading strategies and grammatical principles. This instruction was for six English Learners from two third-grade classrooms. The proficiencies the students had with listening, speaking, reading, and writing varied greatly. This time period allowed me to explicitly teach self-regulating strategies to a small group, the group of students who would be the focus of the action research.

As this short time period did not allow much time for writing activities, a main focus of the time was to provide students with opportunities to talk, supporting them in their use of complete sentences and new academic terms and concepts. In this setting, I
introduced the idea of self-regulated learning as “things we can do when we get stuck, when we are not sure what to do next.” Over the course of the action research, the students and I had discussions about the different things they were trying in order to help them decide what to do in that situation, examining the effectiveness of the strategies the students identified.

The second way that I planned to teach the strategies was during whole class instruction, primarily during Language Arts. While it was my intent for the students to practice with and generalize the strategies to other content areas, I quickly discovered that the hour and a half time period for reading provided the best opportunities for students to use the strategies. This was largely because the tasks that the English Learners seemed to struggle with the most had to do with writing, an activity that my mentor teacher and I ask the students to engage in daily during our Language Arts block of time. My mentor and I leveled our students during this time period with another third grade class, allowing us to split the students into two groups, those who struggle with meeting third grade reading standards and those that are at grade level abilities. We taught the lower of the two groups, teaching the reading curriculum at a slower pace with more support to eighteen students, four of which are English Learners. These four students were four of the six ELs during the English Learners Only instruction (the other two ELs were achieving higher scores in Language Arts, so they were with the higher reading group). As a whole, the students in our reading group needed more time to write and complete other academic tasks. In this setting, I chose to teach self-regulating strategies to both students acquiring English and fluent English speakers.
At first, my method of instruction with self-regulated learning during reading class was much like that of the instruction for the English Learner Only time period. Portions of the class time were spent in discussion about what the students could do when faced with a task they were uncertain how to proceed with. However, as I began to collect data and reflect on the effectiveness of these discussions, I eventually recognized the need for much more explicit instruction. I then began to teach a self-regulation strategy, such as sharing ideas with a classmate prior to beginning a writing activity, before giving the students a task to try the strategy on. The short time period for the English Learner Only instruction did not allow for this change in instructional method.

**Strategies**

The strategies that I explicitly taught the students fell into the three categories of asking for help, organizing information, and staying on task. After the majority of the strategies had been explicitly taught, discussed, and modeled for the students, I created a bookmark to be placed in the students’ reading folders called “Monitoring Strategies,” explaining that the strategies were new things to try when the students were trying to complete work, but were feeling stuck. We talked about “monitoring” as the thinking we could each do about which strategy worked best for us and our own learning. Listed on the bookmarks in the asking for help category were the strategies of: asking a teacher for the directions again, asking a teacher questions about the work, asking a teacher for help, asking a neighbor for help, and finding a good model (observing a peer to see if he or she was doing something that should be imitated). Under the section for organizing information, the strategies included were: making an idea web, taking notes, and sharing ideas out loud with a neighbor. The staying on task category included: asking neighbors...
to talk less, asking a teacher to be allowed to move if a group is too noisy, getting rid of
disturbing things on/in desks, and setting a timer. Each section also contained two blank
lines where students could write any other strategies that they felt would help them but
were not already included.

As the students were already familiar with the strategies from whole class
discussions about each one and time to practice “the strategy of the day,” they already
had some ideas about which strategies were the most and the least likely to be beneficial
to them. I encouraged them to put a star next to their favorite items and a checkmark next
to the ones that they felt did not currently benefit them very much. I taught the students
to automatically pull the “Monitoring Strategies” bookmarks out of their folders anytime
they were doing individual work at their desks (primarily during Language Arts, but there
was some generalization to other subject matters over time).

To give the students another way to reflect for themselves on the usefulness of a
selected strategy, I also created the “Monitoring Strategies Checklist.” On this full-sized
piece of paper, also to be kept in student reading folders, was a chart. The chart provided
space for the students to list the strategy they used, what kind of strategy it was, the date,
and room to write if they thought the strategy worked for them and a brief description of
why it did or did not.

Population

The context in which this study took place was a third grade general education
class located in a rural district. Of the eighteen students in the reading class, nine were
boys and nine were girls. Although the majority of the group was Caucasian, four of the
students were Latino, one of the students was African American, and two of the students
qualified for American Indian Education. Diverse learning needs needed to be accounted for as four of the students were English Learners, two of the students had IEPs, two of the students had 504s, and many of the students had at one time qualified for interventions, mostly in the area of reading.

**English Learner Population**

The four EL students that much of my data collection focused on were equally split in gender, two girls and two boys, who will be referred to in this work as “Nina,” “Elisa,” “Luis,” and “Oscar.” All four students spoke Spanish as their primary language at home. Their proficiency levels with the four domains of English Language Learning (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) varied greatly. The relationship that I had with each student also varied. As mentioned earlier when describing care ethics and my teaching philosophies, I believe that establishing a caring and trusting connection with students is imperative in any classroom context, but especially in an environment where I would be asking the students to be transparent in sharing their reflections of their learning process with one another and myself. Mrs. Crist and I spent the first several weeks of school creating an environment with the students that fostered and encouraged mutual respect, trust, and support of all. I found that while Nina and Elisa very quickly showed an outward positive response to my attempts to get to know them, Luis’ response was a little slower, and Oscar seemed (visibly, at least) almost unresponsive to both Mrs. Crist and me. This caused me to wonder to what extent, if any, the student response to the self-regulation strategies would be dependent on the relationship I had with each student. As we began working with the strategies, I made sure to note any thoughts or observations that arose around care ethics and self-regulation.
Treatment

During the course of the action research, multiple types of data collection were set into place for the purpose of triangulation. Hubbard and Power (1999) refer to triangulation as the “use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigations, or theories (at least three) to confirm findings” (p. 120). The types of data collection used in this research included observations, field notes, student interviews, student work, student reflections, audio recording, and video taping.

Observations

While I relied on my own observations to help me make quick changes to my instruction in self-regulating strategies, it was the observations of my mentor that proved especially useful. She allowed me to see aspects of student learning that I did not notice myself. We engaged in almost daily conversations about any circumstances that noted either growth in or confusion about the strategies. Her insight helped me to reflect on factors besides the ones that I gravitated towards. The observations from both of us allowed me to have a fuller picture of what was taking place during class.

I also made a point to observe a few times during Language Arts in the classroom where the students in the higher reading group were working. These were not the students that I was focusing on the most, as I had limited access to their daily work, but I found myself curious. The high reading group consisted of both students who were English proficient and English Learners who were selected to be in the group based on their high academic success in reading and writing from the previous year and progress they made over the course of the current school year. These students received the least amount of explicit instruction from me than any other group about the self-regulation strategies. In
fact, they were not even given bookmarks and checklists to keep in their reading folders. My curiosity stemmed from this question: Do students who tend to be strong readers, English Learners or not, innately use self-regulation strategies more than students who tend to struggle with Language Arts? I knew that I would not be able to devote enough time to fully answer this question and still focus on the action research question I was already investigating heavily, but I did observe this group of students on a few occasions and took notes during the observations. Quick, informal interviews with some of the students were included in my notes.

Field Notes

The field notes are the notes that I took during and after instruction, documenting my observations over time. I found that the notes were more detailed when I could write things down in the moment. However, because I was also delivering instruction, it was not always possible for me to take time to write the experiences down immediately. In these instances, I took notes during lunch breaks or after school.

Student Interviews

Over the course of the action research, I interviewed the students several times. Sometimes these interviews were informal and spontaneous, with me asking questions of individual or small groups of students during class time as I noted a circumstance that made me curious about what the students were thinking about. At other times, the interviews were more formal, where I would pull students individually aside and ask questions, recording their answers.
Student Work

All writing of the students was kept over the course of the study, allowing me to compare the types of work produced at the beginning of the study with the work that was produced after the introduction of the strategies. The students in the reading group were asked every Monday to write about their weekends. On other days of the week, the students typically responded to at least three other writing prompts, revising some of the work on the fifth day. During the English Learner Only instruction, writing was often hard to do because of the limited time. However, when the students did write, it was in individual notebooks with each entry dated.

Student Reflections

At the beginning of the action research, the primary student reflections I collected were student interviews I conducted. However, as I realized the need for more explicit instruction in various self-regulating strategies, I used the students’ “Monitoring Strategies” bookmarks and “Monitoring Strategies Checklist” to provide another resource for the students to monitor their thinking about the strategies, but for me to as well. Each student indicated their preferred and disliked strategies on their bookmarks, which helped them know which strategies to try out and record information about on the checklists. I would occasionally give a writing prompt during the reading class that would ask the students to write about their favorite or least favorite strategy, providing detailed reasons for why the strategy did or did not work for them. I used these charts and writing activities to help me in deciding which questions to ask during student interviews, attempting to get as clear a view of student perceptions of the effectiveness of the strategies as possible.
Audio Recording

Towards the end of the study, I began to document student talk about the strategies by recording their conversations. During instances where I heard students in the reading group talk about their use of the strategies without prompting, I would attempt to surreptitiously record their discussions for later analysis. In this way, I was able to hear some of the things the students thought about self-regulating strategies that did not originate from student interviews, allowing me a glimpse of student thought unaffected by any perceptions they had of what I would want to hear during an interview.

Video Taping

Along with audio recordings, I began to videotape segments of class time towards the end of the study. My main purpose of video recording was to give myself an opportunity to revisit teaching moments at a later time, unhindered by the perceptions I had during those moments. Some of the videotaping focused on students’ use of the strategies during independent work, but some of the footage focused more on the ways in which my mentor teacher and I interacted with students during their work.

Data Analysis Procedures

As my study progressed, I realized that the types of data I was collecting did not match with my previous notions of what research entailed. I had previously considered quantitative data as the most official type of data. A review of the features of qualitative data, as stated by Bogdan and Biklen (2007), allowed me to see that while my data does not match up with the characteristics of quantitative data, my data is valid and fitting for my question. Three of the main aspects of qualitative research in particular stood out to me. The first is that my classroom, “the natural setting,” is “the direct source of data,”
and I as the researcher am “the key instrument in qualitative research” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 234). The second is that “qualitative data are collected in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers” (p. 235). This, perhaps, is the aspect of my data that had most concerned me; while my data does not include concrete numbers such as test scores or trimester progress, it does encompass verbal and written words. The third characteristic of qualitative research that caught my attention is that qualitative researchers “are concerned with process as well as product” (p. 235). While I did have an end goal that I hoped to see accomplished, I found early on that the paths the students took during the study were fascinating to me and ultimately more important than the realization of my own wishes.

In beginning to analyze the data, I used the process of memoing and coding. According to Birks, Chapman, and Francis (2008), memoing allows “the researcher to engage with the data to a depth that would otherwise be difficult to achieve” (p. 69). While memoing, I examined my data, making notes of my impressions and thoughts. I then reviewed the notes, looking for recurring words and phrases. This began the coding part of the process, allowing me to see themes emerge from my data. As I saw any memos that seemed to follow a trend, I labeled the trend and assigned it a number. I then attempted to find as many pieces of evidence from my data for each theme, beginning the process of triangulating my data.
Chapter IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The driving focus of this study was to discover to what extent, if any, the explicit instruction of self-regulation strategies allowed my third-grade English Learners to monitor their learning and take steps to meet their own learning needs. As I began sorting through the various types of data collected over the course of the study using the memoing and coding process, themes started to emerge. The themes that will be presented here are the instruction delivery for the self-regulation strategies, student preferred strategies, the self-reflection the students did, the importance of talking, student engagement levels, changes in self-efficacy beliefs towards literacy tasks, and changes in student work over time.

While I started examining the data collected on English Learners first as the action research question focused on their outcomes, I quickly found that the data collected on English proficient students in the Language Arts group was equally interesting and revealing. Moreover, the data on both types of students equally informed me of changes that I should make to my teaching practices. As such, the outcomes for all of the students in the daily Language Arts group will be shared here.

Strategy Instruction Delivery

As I began thinking about the best ways to introduce self-regulation strategies into the students’ academic toolboxes, three main ways to deliver instruction emerged. The first was during the English Learner Only instruction that I lead for thirty minutes a day.
The second was during whole class instruction, and the third was also whole class instruction, but specifically during the Language Arts portion of the day. As my action research unfolded, I wanted to discover which of these time periods seemed the most beneficial for the English Learners to understand, utilize, and reflect on the strategies.

I first looked at the data I had collected during the English Learner Only instruction. My field notes and observations indicated that this time was useful in checking for understanding about the rationale for using the strategies and facilitating conversations between the students on the strategies that they were trying out. However, because this time was limited to thirty minutes, the students were unable to do much more than talk about the strategies because starting and finishing a writing task in such a short period of time was challenging. I also surveyed the EL students regarding where they felt they learned the most about the strategies; not one of them listed the EL group as a time that they felt was critical to their learning in this area.

These findings seemed to carry over to whole class instruction as well. I observed that the students were able to engage in conversations about the strategies, even pulling out the materials we created for them to reference while they were talking. But talking without the application of the skills that they were talking about had limitations. My field notes showed that after whole class instruction, including teacher instruction, role modeling, and conversations, the time for the students to apply what they learned could be one to three hours after we had talked about and many of them required additional help from Mrs. Crist and I to actually utilize a strategy. On the survey conducted during the English Learner Only instruction, the students indicated that this time was “okay” for
learning about the strategies, but only minimally useful in helping them actually using the strategies.

My field notes, as well as the observations of Mrs. Crist, showed that the combination of students being able to talk with me and/or amongst themselves during Language Arts about the strategies followed by immediate attempts at implementation had the best results. The students were able to remember the conversations in which they had engaged in because there was no gap between the talk and the application of what they had learned. They were able to continue conversations with their teacher and classmates as they approached a learning task and use of a strategy, especially encouraged for the students who had selected asking a neighbor or sharing ideas. During the survey for the EL students, they cited this instruction time as the most beneficial for themselves. Elisa stated that it was “easier to find a good role model when lots of kids are doing what I’m supposed to do.” Luis mentioned that it made more sense to him when he could practice something I instructed everyone on right away. After connecting this data, I did continue to reference the strategies during more than one section of the day as I wanted to help the students see other areas that they might make use of self-regulation skills. However, special emphasis was placed on the Language Arts period of time for direct instruction, teacher and student-directed conversations, role-modeling, and approaching a learning task while using a strategy.

Student Preferences for the Strategies and Self-Reflection

The first method used to get the students thinking about which strategies may work best for them was the Monitoring Strategies Bookmark. Over the course of a few days, we spent some time talking about the three categories of strategies on the bookmarks
(asking for help, organizing information, and staying on task), describing what the possible actions in each category would look like. I then asked the students to use the information from our discussions to speculate on which two to three strategies they thought might be useful for themselves. The students were directed to put a star next to those items on the bookmarks. I also asked them to put checkmarks next to any items they suspected would not be very helpful in getting them started on a learning task.

As Table 1 portrays, the majority of students in the Language Arts group indicated items from the categories of asking for help and staying on task as the strategies most likely to help them when they felt “stuck” during a learning task. The two strategies most frequently selected as potentially being helpful were setting a timer (10 votes) and asking the teacher for help (9 votes). Other popular items included asking a neighbor for help and sharing ideas out loud with a neighbor. The majority of items that students thought would not be very helpful were in the organizing information category. The students did not seem initially impressed with the idea of taking notes or making idea webs as ways of getting started on a learning task. A few of the students made statements such as, “I don’t like idea webs cause it’s like more writing before I even start writing.”
Table 1

*Student Selection of Potential Preferred or Non-preferred Monitoring Strategies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ask for Help</th>
<th>Organize Information</th>
<th>Stay on Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ask for directions again</strong></td>
<td><strong>Make an idea web</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ask neighbors to talk less</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ask questions about work</strong></td>
<td><strong>Take notes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ask teacher to move if group is too noisy</strong></td>
</tr>
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<td>Preferred</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ask teacher for help</strong></td>
<td><strong>Share ideas with neighbor</strong></td>
<td><strong>Getting rid of distracting items in/on desk</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Preferred</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 (3 ELs)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5 (2 ELs)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ask neighbor for help</strong></td>
<td><strong>Set a timer</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Preferred</td>
<td>Non-preferred</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 (2 ELs)</td>
<td>2 (1 EL)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Find a good model</strong></td>
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<td>Preferred</td>
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<td>3 (1 EL)</td>
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After selecting items on the bookmarks to remind the students which strategies might work the most for them, pulling the bookmarks from reading folders became a routine occurrence during any writing activity. The students tried their starred strategies first. For the first three to four times engaging in this new practice, Mrs. Crist and I role modeled one of the strategies before we assigned a writing task. After giving the directions for the writing task, I asked each student to put their finger on the starred strategy that they were going to try. They were then asked to try the writing strategy, even if they were not having difficulty beginning the task in order to determine if the strategy would actually be as beneficial for them as they had predicted. Mrs. Crist and I interacted with students who were trying strategies that involved students asking teachers
for something. About three minutes after the last hand went up, I would scan the room to see if any students did not appear to be writing for long periods of time before approaching any such students. I would ask struggling students to tell me about the strategy they were trying out, and if it wasn’t working for them, we would pick another one together and try it on a one-to-one basis. I found that several students needed more scaffolding in this process; I spoke with them individually two to three times over the course of the first two weeks before they were able to begin using the strategies on their own. This included Luis, Elisa, and Nina, as well as eight of the students who were English proficient.

After the first week of the use of self-regulation strategies during the writing segment of Language Arts, I introduced the second method that the students would use to record their thinking about the usefulness of the strategies they were using. The students began using the Monitoring Strategies Checklist to record which strategy they used, whether they felt it worked or not, and a brief description of why they thought it did or did not work. The students noted their experiences with the strategies 1-2 times weekly on this checklist for several weeks.

I first did individual check-ins with the students after the first and second times they recorded their experiences to check for understanding on how to use the form. In answer to whether the strategy worked or not and why, several of the students had written responses like this one from Luis: “Yes, it worked,” or this one from one of the English proficient students: “No.” Realizing that more scaffolding was necessary before the students would be able to independently use the checklists in a way that would give all of us the most information about their experiences with the strategies, I used the “I Do, We
Do, You Do” teaching method to provide more support. During Language Arts, I filled out a checklist on the document camera in the class, doing think-alouds at the same time to model the thought process behind my actions. I then asked the students to help me do another example. The students then worked in small groups to complete a third example before once again doing one independently. I asked for willing students to share their work with others on the document camera before collecting all the examples. After examining the work they had done independently, I determined that the students seemed to have a better grasp of what I was asking of them to record on the checklists.

Once both the students and I knew they knew how to approach the checklists, I reviewed the checklists with each student on Fridays and was quickly intrigued by some patterns emerging. According to their checklists, the majority of students had made accurate predictions for themselves about which strategies may or may not be beneficial for them. The students’ written reflections supported about 70% of the predictions made. I noticed that the students were sticking to one or two strategies that were working for them, which ultimately was fine, but I did encourage them to try new ones. When the students began trying strategies that they had not initially marked as potentially being helpful or not helpful, the students recorded information that showed that less than 40% of the newly approached strategies worked for them.

Most of the 30% of predictions the students made about strategies that did not turn out to be accurate were related to strategies involving asking the teacher for something. Several of the students had selected that as the first strategy that they would try. When I looked at my field notes from class conversations about why certain strategies were the most popular, I had recorded many statements from students that pointed to a common
... student belief that teachers were one of the best resources because they are supposed to have “all the answers.” As the students began trialing the strategies, many of them found that while talking to teachers about the work could help sometimes, it wasn’t the best choice for them every time; ideas and feedback from peers could be more useful than teacher input at times.

About four weeks into the process of implementing self-regulation strategies into the Language Arts block, I began individually interviewing students about their experiences with the strategies. I found that their verbal responses to my questions matched their written reflections almost across the board. Only four of the twenty students, one an English Learner and the others English proficient, gave answers that differed from the ones that they recorded on their own. Luis, for example, had written that setting a timer was a strategy that worked for him because it helped him keep track of how much time he had left, but when I interviewed him, he said that the timer sometimes made him feel rushed instead. With follow-up questions and asking the four students to compare their answers, we came to the realization that their experiences with the strategies were dependent on many factors, not just the ones that we all could work to control in the classroom environment, but also the experiences that made up a student’s day, at school and at home. Luis eventually said that on days when he was late for school or the last one in the door after recess, the timer seemed less helpful than on other days.

The students’ verbal responses to the individual interviews were far more reflective and in-depth than I had anticipated as I prepared questions for them. One part of my action research plan that concerned me originally was that in order to truly know what impact the students thought self-regulation strategies could and did have on their
experiences with work, I would need eight and nine year olds to be transparent with their thought processes with themselves and with me. Research abounds in the areas of monitoring one’s own thought process, but most of it focuses on students much older than early elementary school students…what if the demands I was making of them were not appropriate developmentally? These concerns were quickly laid to rest. The students showed in multiple ways that they were actually monitoring their learning and able to share their new understandings with others, increasingly so as they practiced. They were able to do so through writing down their experiences with strategy implementation, talking to their teachers and each other about their experiences, responding verbally to individual interview questions, and answering short surveys. Even their initial predictions about the usefulness of certain strategies showed that when given an opportunity to really examine their thoughts on what might work best for them, many of them selected strategies that were appropriate for themselves. I also observed changes over time in how much support they needed implementing a strategy and which strategies were being used as the students reflected about the benefits of certain actions they could take for the task they were faced with in the moment.

Importance of Talking

One theme that emerged as I was going through the coding and memoing process was the importance of talking. Prior to instruction in self-regulation strategies during Language Arts, Mrs. Crist and I would typically give direct instruction on a topic, provide verbal and visual instructions and expectations around a writing task, and have the students begin the task. There were some assignments that were given to small groups where the expectation was that the students could work with one another to complete the
task, but we found that the students often talked about off-task topics. I included opportunities for students to rely on each other to complete a task as options for them to select from the self-regulation strategies, but based on how allowing students to talk had not always been successful for us in the past, I did not predict great success with these particular strategies.

As shown earlier, nearly half of the students gravitated towards sharing ideas with a neighbor and asking a neighbor for help. A couple of students, including Luis, thought that these strategies may prove more of a distraction than a benefit due to the off-task behaviors they sometimes saw (or engaged in) during collaborative tasks. As the students first began trialing strategies, it did appear that these particular strategies more often prolonged the amount of time it took for students to begin a task and they sometimes even needed to use a secondary strategy if the talking had not been focused on the work.

Not wanting to cheat the students from an opportunity to develop collaborative skills, Mrs. Crist and I resisted the temptation to yank these as strategies from which the students could select. An understanding that for the English Learners in particular, students who may have deficits in oral language skills, continuing to support the students in use of strategies that would involve oral skills was incredibly important. As Echevarria, Vogt, and Short (2010) state, while the goal for all students is to guide them in utilizing independent self-regulation skills, English Learners in particular “have difficulty initiating an active role in using these strategies because they are focusing mental energy on their developing language skills,” so teachers need to provide “many opportunities for them to use a variety of learning strategies,” (p. 99). Duffy (2002) posits that “it is generally agreed that [strategies] should be taught through explicit instruction,
careful modeling, and scaffolding (as cited in Echevarria et al., 2010, p. 99). We began role modeling for the students what sharing ideas with a neighbor prior to starting a writing task could look like. We then asked the students to pair up and practice that skill on a given writing topic. Student pairs that wanted to share their thinking with the whole class were encouraged to do so.

After a few rounds of this level of practice with this type of strategy, my field notes and observations began to show that student conversations were staying more work-focused and productive. The reflections the students made about this type of strategy on their checklists also shifted from the strategies being “sort of okay” to quite useful. Some students began writing things like, “Sometimes the teacher is busy, so it’s good to be able to ask a friend to talk with me about the writing.” Nina shared during an interview with me that sometimes her teachers were confusing to her when they explained how to do something, but “a neighbor that gets what the teacher is saying can explain it to me better.” Oscar said, “I like talking to my friends more about things.” My field notes of whole group conversations also have record of students making comments like this student’s: “I think talking with my neighbors is great cause then I know what I’m going to write about and my neighbor does too.”

Another aspect of the importance of talk also materialized as I examined my data: the potential impact of teacher talk. Black (1998) describes that while reflecting on her own conversations in the form of conferences with students, she found that “…overwhelmingly, it is teachers who talk,” (p. 41). She goes on to state that while both she and her students found the conversations useful, the “sheer volume” of talk “is distributed in a radically uneven manner, one which falls clearly along the lines of status,
generally reproducing in the conference the kind of teacher control that characterizes most classrooms,” (Black, 1998, p. 42). It was expected that if I were going to scaffold the process of learning to adopt self-regulation strategies for my students that I would need to provide clear and direct instruction, meaning I would need to talk, a lot. But in order for students to truly take ownership of the use of the strategies and monitor their own learning, the amount of teacher talk would need to decrease as student talk, and student control, increased.

My audio and video recordings, field notes, and observations from both Mrs. Crist and myself all clearly indicate that there was a great deal of teacher talk during the first three to four weeks of strategy presentation and implementation. During those first few weeks, when Mrs. Crist and I attempted to take on the role of a facilitator and even observer, the students demonstrated a high need for more input. As the students became more familiar with the practice of using self-regulation skills, I was able to listen more than speak.

One student in particular, Nina, really challenged me to reflect on the impact that I can have on students through not just how much I speak, but the way I speak. During an individual interview, Nina started talking about how much she loved the strategy of setting a timer. When I asked her why it worked for her so well, she said that when the timer was set, her teachers didn’t tell her to “hurry up” or make her feel rushed as much because they knew that she could see the timer for herself. She went on to say that she immediately felt calmer about being asked to write when the teachers either set a timer for the class, or responded affirmatively to her request to set one.
While I finished asking the other questions I had prepared for the interview, I struggled with maintaining focus as I was also reflecting on what she had said. Could it be that I, or even Mrs. Crist, had actually told her to hurry up? This kind of statement to a child did not seem one that would facilitate ownership of one’s own learning, but rather potentially increase anxiety and lower student self-efficacy and motivation to approach the very content I so wanted them to internalize. I could not find any data in my field notes or in Mrs. Crist’s observations to support what Nina had said, so I began to wonder if one of her previous teachers had made comments like this in the past. But then I rewatched a video of a Language Arts instruction period; towards the end of the period, both Mrs. Crist and I were reminding the students that there were about five minutes left. It was I who said, “Be sure to hurry and finish your last couple of thoughts before we put our things away.” So Nina was absolutely correct; I had used the word “hurry” in relation to a writing task. If I had done it once, how many times had I done it before? I had another conversation in which I thanked Nina for telling me about the anxiety she felt around that phrase; her feedback had caused me to investigate and improve an area of my teaching practices. With her permission, I also shared the interaction with the class before leading a discussion on how part of the students taking ownership of their learning was making sure to advocate for oneself by kindly letting teachers and classmates know how they could better support them during academic tasks. This lead to renewed conversations about how together, we could create and maintain the kind of environment and relationships in which students felt safe sharing this type of information not with just their peers, but their teachers.
Student Engagement, Self-Efficacy, and Student Work

As my question began to form early in the school year while I watched my students approach a learning task, student engagement was one of the foremost things I took note of, especially relating to EL students. While all of the students in the Language Arts group spent at least thirty seconds to two minutes thinking about the task we had asked them to achieve before starting it, many of the students took much longer. I found that the EL students often did not begin the writing task until they were approached by a teacher and asked if they needed help. I knew from research conducted on best practices for English Learner instruction that there could be many reasons for this pause, but I found myself wondering how engaged the students were in their own learning process if they would not or could not actively seek any assistance needed for themselves. I also wondered to what extent their beliefs about their abilities to accomplish the work, their self-efficacy, was linked to the level of engagement they approached learning tasks with.

My field notes and observations showed that initially, when faced with a task that they were unsure how to approach, the majority of the students would not request assistance from teachers or peers. Only three students did so without prompting, none of which were ELs. During student interviews prior to the direct instruction of the strategies, I asked the students to describe to me what they would think about when they felt unable to accomplish a writing task. One student said that she would “just feel dumb and then think about other stuff.” Oscar mentioned that he would “think about sports and recess” when he encountered something he didn’t know how to do. These and other responses confirmed what I had seen in my field notes; without a concrete plan of what step(s) to
take when a problem was encountered during the learning, many of the students would disengage from the learning process almost immediately.

Repeated experiences without the results that would meet teacher expectations also impacted the students’ sense of self-efficacy. The first time I engaged in a private conversation with Elisa about why she was not writing, she said that she didn’t know why. I asked her what she was thinking about during the times when she was not writing, and she replied, “I can’t do this anyway. I never can, so I think about fun things instead,” like what she was going to do after school. She was not alone in having this kind of attitude about her own abilities; the Language Arts group Mrs. Crist and I taught were the eighteen lowest readers from two third-grade classrooms. These were students who had had experience after experience during their short time in the world of academics that did not end successfully. How could I expect them to automatically engage in using self-regulation strategies with positive outlooks and expectations for their own outcomes?

After the first three weeks of instruction in and use of the strategies, I began to note a change in the engagement levels of students. The first observable change was that half of the students did not appear to “just be sitting there” any longer. These students were actively seeking out the input of their peers or teachers within seconds of Mrs. Crist or I ending the verbal and visual delivery of a task directive, without reminders from either of us. The second change was noted during week five of my weekly check-ins with students about their checklists; the tone of the students’ written reflections changed from one of surprise when a strategy worked to one of confirmed expectation when it did. The students were beginning to believe that the strategies really were helpful, not because I told them to believe that, but because they were trialing and testing strategy use for
themselves and having positive outcomes. Their checklist notations also let me know that for the students who did not gravitate towards strategies that I could observe them using, such as asking a teacher or neighbor for help, thinking about the task was taking place. Oscar noted on his checklist one day that he knew the strategy of finding a good role model worked for him because, “I got the work done.” When I asked him to tell me more about his experience, he said “I didn’t used to want to do the work because it’s hard, but I can do it now. I look at what [he] is doing and do the same thing if it’s a good thing to do.”

Bandura (1989) posits that individuals who believe themselves capable of achieving certain tasks will ultimately find it easier to successfully accomplish those tasks. While my field notes, observations, and various forms of student reflection were showing that student engagement in the use of self-regulation strategies rose as student beliefs about their ability to accomplish the work also rose, these forms of data collection also pointed to increased productivity in student work. As mentioned earlier, the students who used strategies that encouraged talking were talking almost immediately after the writing tasks were given. Their conversations typically lasted a minute or two, and then they would fall silent and begin writing. The students that used strategies that did not involve speaking with another individual began writing within forty-five seconds to one minute after the task directions were given. This included the English Learners; the students that had once sat for a whole writing period without writing if not approached by a teacher were starting writing tasks one to three minutes after they were assigned. Because the students were more likely to approach their writing with a vision in mind of what they wanted to write and began writing sooner, the students were able to produce more work in the same
period of time. Mrs. Crist and I were able teach the students about peer editing so that when some students finished writing before others, it became habitual for students to find a buddy with whom to edit.

One way that I was able to more firmly link increased self-efficacy to increased student productivity was the final survey I asked the students in the Language Arts group to participate in. I asked the students to indicate whether they had felt good, okay, or not good about writing at the beginning of the year. Of the eighteen students, only two marked that they had felt good about writing. Eight of the students, including Elisa and Oscar, indicated that they had felt okay about writing. Luis, Nina, and the remaining students said that they had not felt good about writing at the beginning of the year. The next question asked them to reflect on how they felt about writing now. The two students who had felt good about writing from the beginning stayed in that category. Only one student who had said that he felt okay about writing at first continued to state “okay” while the rest indicated that they now felt good about it. Of the eight students who stated that they did not feel good about writing at first, only Luis and one other student moved over to the “okay” column while the other seven said they now felt good about writing. Overall, fifteen of the students (three English Learners) indicated good feelings about writing, three students (one English Learner) said they were in the middle, and none of the students selected the “not good” category.

The third section of this concluding reading survey asked the students to describe what changed how they felt about writing. One of the students who had selected the same category both times succinctly wrote, “No change at all.” However, the majority of the other student responses sounded more like this: “I ask my neighbor for help,” or, “We
share ideas out loud now.” Nina wrote that she now was, “Taking my time on my writing. I’m feeling better when I set a timer and share ideas with a friend.” Elisa responded that she wrote “faster by setting a timer and asking a neighbor for help.” These surveys provided another method for me to ascertain that there was a correlation between self-efficacy and student productivity. Furthermore, the surveys showed that the students themselves could see the links.

I also noted that two students had these responses to the final question of the survey: “I write faster because of practice,” and, “I changed from paying more attention.” These two responses were a good reminder for me that while multiple forms of data showed me that student engagement and self-efficacy did appear to rise over the course of my action research through the use of self-regulation strategies, student writing would likely have improved over the course of several weeks without the self-regulation strategies through ample opportunities to practice with teacher feedback and peer reviews.

Other Themes

Over the course of my action research, several new questions and wonderings arose as I watched the students engage in new ways with the strategies and their work. I attempted to document evidence to answer these questions as thoroughly as possible. However, for a few of the questions, only one form of evidence was found during the coding and memoing process, making it difficult to triangulate and verify whether my predictions about the potential answers to my questions were correct or not. One of these areas included whether the students in the higher Language Arts group next door, some of whom were English Learners, naturally employ self-regulation strategies. Another area
was identifying specifically why my relationship with Oscar felt different than the ones with other students (and what impact, if any, a relationship difference between us had on his experience with the self-regulation strategies).

I was able to observe the higher Language Arts group on three occasions. During these times, I took notes and interacted with students, slipping in some questions about their practices into the conversation as much as possible. Some of these students had received some instruction on the strategies during my English Learner Only instruction, others had had some exposure during whole class instruction earlier in their daily schedules before the two classes split for Language Arts, and others had never heard of self-regulation strategies. My observations, interactions, and notes did seem to support that the students appeared to be naturally employing some of the strategies, but I did not feel enough data emerged during my brief times observing their class for me to confirm this. And ultimately, what I was seeing lead to even more questions, like did the students seem more able to use self-regulation skills not because of intrinsic motivation and self knowledge to do so or was it because as they had mastered reading foundations in earlier grades, their teacher was able to do more extensions with them that the students in my reading group had not been privy to? Realizing that it would be impossible for me to have satisfactory conclusions about these inquiries without starting a new action research focus, I returned my attention to the students that were my original focus.

When I started the school year, one of my immediate goals was to form trusting relationships with my students. This desire was only strengthened as I examined the theoretical bases for my action research and realized how critical the role of care ethics was in a classroom environment. When my attempts to get to know some of my students,
especially Oscar, did not result in the visibly warm response I received from other students, I became concerned. Did Oscar trust me? I had no tangible evidence that he did; he typically wouldn’t maintain eye contact during a conversation with me, and although I saw him talking animatedly with students during lunch or recess, his responses to my attempts at establishing a relationship were as brief as possible on his end. While I had many lines of thought about why Oscar appeared indifferent to interactions with both Mrs. Crist and me (cultural background differences, gender, previous teacher experiences, a combination of all three…), I was unable to determine the exact cause. As I began to ask the students to start reflecting on their experiences with the strategies, Oscar’s written answers were detailed. Although his verbal responses to interview questions or informal questions continued to be as brief as possible, he did provide insights into his thought processes. While I remained curious about the differences between our relationship and the ones I had established with other students, I was able to ascertain that Oscar was learning about, reflecting on, and benefiting from the strategies.

Conclusion

Through the process of examining and triangulating my data, I arrived at some conclusions about this action research that left me overwhelmingly feeling like I had achieved my original goal of helping English Learners as well as English proficient students in the Language Arts group begin to internalize some new skills to help them approach a task that most of them had not had largely successful experiences with in the past. The students were now a little more aware of the power that they could hold over their own learning process. They were more able to monitor their own learning and, as such, were able to take immediate action when an obstacle to completing a task was
encountered. The students also were able to share their thinking with others more fluidly than when we first began working together, allowing them to begin to advocate for themselves by speaking up when things in the learning environment that were not conducive to their learning took place. As the students’ experiences with the outcomes from implementation of self-regulating strategies continued to be positive ones, their beliefs about their abilities to handle certain tasks shifted in a positive direction, as did their motivation and engagement levels.
Chapter V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

When teachers enter their classrooms, they are faced with the enormous task of meeting the learning needs of students coming from a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and levels of self-efficacy about learning. Meeting the needs of English Learners is an important part of that task, but the evidenced based practices currently recommended to support English Learners are often useful practices for enriching the learning experiences of every other student in a classroom. The explicit instruction of self-regulation strategies and the provision of ample opportunities for students to apply the strategies is a practice that can be powerful in helping students, both English Learners and those who are English proficient, become more aware of their own learning needs and take necessary actions to promote their learning. Through repeated experiences with positive outcomes as a result of using self-regulation skills, student beliefs about their ability to do certain tasks can also shift in a positive direction, increasing student motivation and engagement in learning.

I began this study intending to find a way to help my students who were English Learners become more engaged in the process of meeting their own learning needs. To do this, I understood that trusting relationships would need to be established in order for the students to be more comfortable sharing their learning experiences with me. The sharing of their reflections was a critical aspect of the study as insights as to what extent and depth they were able to monitor and respond to their learning needs would inform me
in what my next steps a teacher should be to support them in the process of becoming
more independent. Care ethics provided a model for me to consider as Mrs. Crist, our
students, and I began to create a classroom culture together. Noddings (1998) speaks of
the way that communication is an essential component of the development of trust
between two individuals. The specific types of communication that would help teachers
validate their students include identifying the strengths of students, offering
encouragement about areas of weakness, and having an overall tone of caring about
students in each interaction (Noddings, 1998). In doing so, Noddings (1998) states that
these interactions are influencing the climate of the whole class, especially when teachers
focus on an objective to “develop a caring community through modeling, dialogue, and
practice” (p. 179). From the first day of school, this was indeed a primary objective for
Mrs. Crist and I for every one of our students and our efforts served well as a solid
foundation for me to introduce self-regulation strategies to the students.

Many instructional practices exist that I could have selected as the vehicle for
which to attempt to solve the problem I had identified. I selected the vehicle of self-
regulated learning because of the extensive body of research in existence that verifies a
high correlation between explicit instruction in and use of self-regulation with the
academic success of students (Kitsantas, Steen, and Huie, 2009). Self-regulated learning
contains three essential aspects: self-regulated learners are conscious of the fact that
strategic planning and academic success are linked (Zimmerman, 1990), and take action
to manage their efforts on a give task (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990), while also monitoring
how effective the actions they take are and using that information to guide future actions
(Zimmerman, 1990). I appreciated the layers of depth this process had; I did not want to
simply ask my students to start asking for help more often. I wanted them to be aware of their needs, have a variety of tools to select from when problems were encountered, reflect on the usefulness of the chosen tool, and take make decisions about future actions based on those reflections. Over the course of researching the complexities of self-regulated learning, I was convinced that I had found the best course of action for the students in my classroom.

Another reason self-regulated learning seemed to lend itself perfectly to my action research was how well it meshed with other evidenced based practices currently recommended for the instruction of English Learners. As Echevarria, Vogt, and Short (2010) state, “The ultimate goal is for students to develop independence in self-monitoring and self-regulation through practice with peer-assisted and student-centered strategies,” and English Learners often have extra challenges in taking ownership of this process (p. 99). Other recommended evidenced based practices include scaffolding, wait time, visual supports, building off of student background knowledge to connect to new content, previewing content prior to teaching it, and using a variety of approaches to build vocabulary (Echevarria et al., 2010).

Significance of the Study

As I observed and interacted with Mrs. Crist and our third-grade students, I wanted to find the areas in which I might be able to make the most impact on the learning of our students. Through this action research, I came to the realization that it was far more important to help the students be aware that they can impact their own learning. I would only be with the students for one year, but through the internalizing of self-regulated learning, the students could begin taking ownership of their learning beyond our
classroom and school year. According to Bandura (1989), when students have experiences that promote a positive sense of self-efficacy, they begin to visualize themselves as being successful with similar tasks in the future, an indicator of future actions the students may take.

Using care ethics, evidenced based practices for English Learner Instruction, and self-regulated learning as the theoretical bases for my action research, I then began to provide explicit instruction of a selection of self-regulation strategies. This instruction was provided in three contexts: during a thirty minute daily time of English Learner Only instruction, during whole class instruction, and during our Language Arts section of the day. Scaffolding became a heavily relied upon practice in our classroom. In accordance with the information I had gathered about the best ways to deliver instruction to English Learners, and in response to confused facial expressions of students, I quickly learned that verbal instruction without modeling was virtually meaningless to the majority of my students. Through my observations and student reflections on their experiences, we determined that the students were best able to access the content when I modeled how to do something I had instructed on and provided them opportunities to practice the new content with me. Only then did they feel more confident in approaching a new task independently.

Several methods were used to collect data on the effectiveness of the implementation of my action research. I daily observed the students as they worked on new strategies and took field notes. Mrs. Crist also provided her observations. The students used a checklist to record the effectiveness of each strategy they used. I also asked the students to participate in surveys, as well as spontaneous and more formal
interviews. On occasion, I recorded student responses on audio-tape and I also video taped a few segments of the Language Arts group instruction and writing practice. Student work samples were also kept.

As I began the process of coding and memoing with the various forms of data that were collected, some patterns began to appear. By triangulating my observations, field notes, and student surveys, it was clear that the students felt they learned the most about the strategies when they could directly and immediately apply what we had talked about to a learning task. Looking at the student bookmarks, checklists, and the commentary students made during interviews, I noted that the students were highly reflective during this process and often selected strategies for themselves that were successful. The student checklists, interviews and final reading surveys provided me with three sources that indicated that the students beliefs about their abilities to do the work had improved over time, as had their feelings about writing in general. The engagement levels of students notably increased as their self-efficacy shifted to a more confident viewpoint. Observing them approach writing tasks, my field notes on the Language Arts period, and the student work itself towards the end of the data collection period showed that the students were now starting their writing tasks sooner, completing more work, and often able to do extension activities with extra time. Examining all the above forms of data allowed me to conclude that while the action research was primarily meant to benefit the English Learners in the Language Arts group, benefits were seen for the English proficient students as well.
Limitations

The first limitation I knew this action research would have was a small sample size. Eighteen students participated in our Language Arts group, only four of whom were English Learners. Based on triangulation of data collected from these eighteen students, I arrived at some conclusions about the work that we had done together. However, in the back of my mind, I did wonder what the data may have looked like with a larger student pool. A second limitation was the location of the school district itself; the community was located in a rural area and many of the students received free and reduced lunch every day. Fellow educators who may want to duplicate some or all of the steps I took in my action research would need to know that the ways my classroom sample differed from theirs would likely impact the results achieved in their action research.

A third limitation I noted was that although I did my best to become informed on the cultures and home lives of my students, I was unable to fully know the circumstances of each student. The home lives of students can have a major impact on their ability to focus on learning from day to day, but ultimately, I focused on the conditions that were inside my sphere of influence. Mrs. Crist and I kept a variety of snack items in the classroom for students who arrived to school having not eaten breakfast. We quickly found that having the two of us made it easier to provide emotional support for students negatively impacted by traumatic events. We did our best to see our students as whole individuals, and take part in caring for them as whole individuals, but there were some limitations on our ability to do so.
Implications for Future Research

An area that I greatly wanted to pursue after examining my findings from the data was the generalization of the self-regulation strategies to other content areas and even beyond the classroom. The work that the students did on learning to use the strategies, monitoring their learning, and sharing their reflections took time to learn. Towards the end of the school year, I did begin some direct instruction and facilitated class discussions on other times students could find the self-regulating strategies useful. I noted after one of these discussions that later in the day, Oscar, an English Learner, pulled his bookmark with the list of strategies on it during independent work with math. I did not see any other evidence of generalization during the last few days of the year, but that moment did make me wish I would be teaching the same students for another year so I could continue to provide opportunities for the students to practice using the skills in content areas besides Language Arts.

Another line of questioning that occurred to me during the action research that caused me to wish for the opportunity for further exploration was that of higher Language Arts group led by another third-grade teacher. Because of the limited chances I had to interact with these students, I was unable to gather enough research to verify to what extent, if any, students who have mastered basic reading skills and tend to have largely positive experiences and beliefs about their abilities to accomplish given tasks are able to instinctively use some of the self-regulation strategies that I explicitly taught the students in the lower Language Arts group to use. I also desired to see what results might have occurred if the two groups had been mixed ability groupings as opposed to separating the high and low readers. What might the results for the students in the lower group have
been if they were to have access to peer role models who were already using the strategies? And for the students who excelled with reading—how may they have benefited from opportunities to be peer mentors? Would their understanding and the awareness of the strategies have been enriched?

Recommendations

For any educators that are looking for ways to increase the self-monitoring and independent skill sets of both English Learners and English proficient students, direct instruction of self-regulated learning practices proved to be a powerful method for my students. However, the success of this practice also depended on the other theoretical bases I implemented while using self-regulated learning. Without establishing caring and trusting environment where the students felt that I respected them and had high expectations for their learning, we may have missed out on several opportunities for students to consider making changes about their learning habits and being transparent in sharing their thinking with teachers and peers. If instruction had been given in the strategies without reference to evidenced based practices to best present subject matter in an understandable way to English Learners, the four students that were the focal point of my study may also have missed opportunities to learn.
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APPENDIX A
APPENDIX B