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Helping High School English Learners Self-Regulate Their Writing Development Through Formative Assessments

by

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A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Teaching.

Hamline University

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Overview

Writing has been a very important part of my life. I have used it as an emotional outlet through writing songs and journaling, as well as a creative outlet through writing stories. As my writing shifted from the creative to the academic, I found myself drawn to learning the nuances of language through grammar. Part of the reason I decided to become an English language (EL) teacher is because of this interest in language and the cultures in which they are found. It was quite fitting, then, when in my second year of teaching high school English language development (ELD), I was assigned to teach Academic Writing. My students, however, had a much different experience with writing than I did; instead of being an outlet like it was for me, writing for them was a chore. It was through our work together that year that I realized teaching my students to write would need to go beyond writing.

Through my research, I hope to answer the question, *how can formative assessments help high school English learners self-regulate their development in writing?* The first chapter of this paper will discuss the rationale behind my research question, its significance to the field of education, my personal teaching journey as an EL teacher, and a summary of my capstone project.

Rationale

My experience as an English language teacher spans kindergarten through 12th grade. From working with these varied age groups, I have noticed a shift that happens as students go through our school system. My kindergarteners were eager to learn, curious

about everything, and full of questions. My high schoolers, on the other hand, are eager to finish assignments, curious about whether an assignment is graded or not, and full of questions about how much an assignment is worth. Our schools seem to be extinguishing lifelong learners instead of creating them. I want to change that.

One of my principal goals as a teacher is to help my students develop skills that they will need to meet their life goals. While writing is a practical skill necessary for today's world, my focus goes beyond communication skills. I want them to think critically about the world around them and question what they hear; to be able to independently find the answers to their questions; to see something difficult as a challenge to overcome instead of an impossibility. I want to find a way to help my students become more motivated and independent lifelong learners through the medium of writing.

Another goal I have is to discover a way to meet the unique individual needs of my students. As English learners, every student of mine is coming into the classroom with a different educational history. Some have been in the same school district since early elementary school while others moved to the United States as teenagers. Such diverse backgrounds create diverse needs as well. Through this project, I hope to discover how to more effectively differentiate writing lessons to help meet all of my students' unique needs. My research question, *how can formative assessments help high school English learners self-regulate their development in writing?* will help me do just that.

Significance to the Field of Education

The number of English learners in the United States grows every year. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2021), between fall 2010 and fall 2020

the number of English learners in public schools grew from 9.2% of students, or 4.5 million students, to 10.4% of students, or 5.1 millions students. Gone are the days when a school district can assume all of its students come from the same linguistic background. This being the case, all teachers need to be language teachers for our students to be successful in school. One way to uncover the language and content needs of students is through formative assessments. Formative assessments can help teachers discover the background knowledge a student is bringing into the classroom while also noticing the areas in which the student may still need to develop (McTighe, 2021). This knowledge can then be used to differentiate instruction for the particular needs of the students. My research will uncover the most effective characteristics of formative assessments and how they can be used to help students to take a more active role in their learning.

Personal Journey

The first hints of my research question came to me during my second year of teaching in a US public school. I was teaching an Academic Writing class for ninth graders, many of whom were identified as long-term English learners, or LTELs. While the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) does not have an official definition for LTELs (MDE, 2021), the identifying characteristic of this population of students is that they have had formal education in the United States for over 5 years but are still not considered proficient in English (Alvarez et al., 2014; MDE, 2021; Olsen, 2010). As is characteristic of this population of students, their English development had plateaued and the majority struggled academically overall.

One of the first obstacles I noticed my students had to overcome was the internal dialogue they had started to believe about themselves and schooling, namely that they did

not belong. They did not see themselves as writers or as having the ability to write so they did not even want to try. I attempted to help them challenge this mentality by incorporating activities with a focus on the growth mindset, having students create SMART goals for their writing, and highlighting their development as writers. I also had students do a weekly freewrite in journals to help them build their writing muscles and confidence.

The other challenge my students faced was the idea that the first draft was the final draft. Whether due to a misconception or developed as a coping mechanism to avoid discomfort, this led to students shutting down once the first draft was done. I attempted to challenge this idea by making the writing process explicit, reminding them each day where we were in the five step process: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, or publishing. I also scaffolded their revision days by adding checklists and modeling exactly what they were to do. I left the school that year exhausted but bursting with ideas to help my students. However, an opportunity arose to transfer to an elementary school in the district and, being not quite ready to settle in high school, I decided to make the shift.

My third and fourth years of teaching were at a dual language English-Spanish school where I worked with kindergarteners and first graders. There, my focus was not on writing and reading (they were learning that in Spanish in their classrooms) but on speaking and listening. I was thrilled to be able to work with students just beginning their academic journey because it gave me a chance to be a part of setting their educational foundation, showing them they belong in school and instilling in them the growth mindset from a young age.

While I loved teaching at the elementary level, my fifth year of teaching brought a move to a different city which meant a move to a different school as well. This led to my return to high school teaching and, coincidentally, my return to teaching Academic Writing. My first year at the school also coincided with the first year fully back from distance learning due to COVID. Perhaps because of this change, one struggle that was common across the school was student buy-in, and it was no different in my classes. After explaining directions for an activity, the first question asked was often, *Is this graded?* If it happened to be an ungraded activity, many students were reluctant to do it. As a teacher who is very intentional about grading, meaning I do not grade everything, I had to find a way to help them understand ungraded activities can be just as valuable as graded ones. So, I started using sports analogies. *What's the point of soccer practice? To build skills. This is our writing practice. The focus isn't on scoring but on building skills to help you on game day when you write your final paper.* This helped increase buy-in temporarily but it never lasted longer than a class period. Not only that, but I was beginning to realize that as much as I saw the value in a growth mindset, my grading did not exactly reflect that value.

It was during a professional development class on formative assessments that I began to see a way to have my grading reflect my emphasis on learning over points. One of the formative assessment methods covered was HyperRubrics. These living rubrics focus on the growth students make from draft to final product (Gonzalez, 2021). The teacher analyzes the drafts of the class to determine in which areas students need support; creates a 1-4 point scale for each area and specifies what students *can do* at each level; and hyperlinks resources within the rubric so students can individually work on

developing a skill and progress in their learning. With this format a critical component of formative assessment is possible, the feedback cycle between teacher and student, which helps the student focus their learning and begin to develop self-regulation skills (Sadler, 1989).

Excited about how this approach could help better support my students, I began incorporating some aspects of HyperRubrics into my teaching. After turning in a draft, students would self-assess using the rubric I would later use for their final grade. Within that rubric I linked resources such as screencasts, videos, and past assignments that they could use to review a concept we had previously learned. I liked the direction my rubric was going but still saw areas for improvement, the biggest of which was helping students take a more active role in their learning.

It is through these experiences that I came to the question, *how can formative assessments help high school English learners self-regulate their development in writing?* This project will help me answer this question by researching the benefits of self-regulation, the characteristics of effective formative assessment, and the specific needs of English learners in the domain of writing. I will then use this knowledge to create a HyperRubric, the instructional videos embedded within the rubric, and a planning and reflection document to help students on their path to becoming more active, self-regulated learners. By clearly communicating to students how their learning is developing using concrete standards, the rubrics will become the basis for effective and frequent student-teacher writing conferences, conferences that inform the teacher of how students are progressing and provide the student with timely and actionable feedback, both of which are integral characteristics of effective formative assessment.

Summary

In this chapter, I set the foundation for my research question: *how can formative assessments help high school English learners self-regulate their development in writing?* I provided rationale for my question by describing the shift in mindset that happens as students move through our public school system, from one focusing on curiosity and learning to one focusing on points, and how witnessing that shift influenced my goals as a teacher. I explained the significance of my project by providing statistics on the growing number of English learners in our schools and how, as teachers, it is our job to make sure their diverse needs are being met. Lastly, I described how my personal experience as an Academic Writing teacher for secondary English learners led me to my research question.

In Chapter Two, I will begin by researching self-regulated learning in terms of its definition, history, and models as well as the characteristics of learners who are self-regulated. Next, the benefits and characteristics of effect formative assessments are examined. After that, I will define English learners and address the commonalities and differences they share related to school performance as well as their particular needs with regards to writing. Lastly, I will explore cultural considerations and how to reduce the cultural dissonance students from non-dominant cultures experience in school. Chapter Three is a description of the format my project will take as well as how it will be implemented. Chapter Four concludes my project by reflecting on the process of researching and creating my project and will also discuss how I plan to use my project in the future.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Overview

The goal of this capstone project is to answer the question: *how can formative assessments help high school English learners self-regulate their development in writing?* To do so, it is important to break it down into its three main parts: self-regulated learning, formative assessments, and English learners. In addition, I will address the implications of teaching students from a cultural background different from the White, middle-class culture upon which the U.S. school system is built. Thus, in the first section of this chapter, I will discuss the framework of self-regulated learning, including its history, the features of the most cited models, and the characteristics of self-regulated learners. The second section is focused on defining formative assessment, delineating the components needed to effectively formatively assess students, and discussing the benefits formative assessment can have on student learning. In the third section, I will review literature about English learners (ELs) in terms of who they are, what the literature has discovered about teaching writing to ELs, and how to provide effective feedback. Lastly, in the fourth section, I will compare and contrast Western, individualist school culture with Non-Western, collectivist school culture and how to support students by lessening the cultural dissonance they experience at school. This research will inform my project by helping me ensure that the HyperRubric, instructional videos, and supplementary materials I create encourage the development of self-regulated learning, demonstrate the characteristics of effective formative assessment, are differentiated to meet the diverse

academic needs of my students, and incorporate the cultural backgrounds my students bring to the classroom.

Self-Regulated Learning

Definition

Self-regulated learning is a broad framework that encompasses the cognitive, metacognitive, and motivational factors that affect how a student learns (Boekaerts & Corno, 2005; Panadero, 2017). It includes learned skills that help individuals become the directors of their learning, such as setting goals, choosing strategies appropriate for the task, monitoring one's learning, managing time, and evaluating one's performance (Xiao & Yang, 2019; Zimmerman, 2002). As Zimmerman (2002) states, "Self-regulation is not a mental ability or an academic performance skill; rather it is the self-directive process by which learners transform their mental abilities into academic skills" (p. 65).
Self-regulated learning, then, is not a trait that some students have and others do not; it is a set of learned skills that all students, at some capacity, are able to develop with the right instruction (Boekaerts & Corno, 2005; Macmillan Reference USA, 2009; Xiao & Yang, 2019; Zimmerman, 2002).

Concerning the term *self-regulated learning*, it is important to note that while it includes the word *self*, it should not be inferred that an individual is learning only on their own, away from others (Zimmerman, 2002). As explained by Zimmerman (2002), "What defines them as 'self-regulated' is not their reliance on socially isolated methods of learning, but rather their personal initiative, perseverance, and adoptive skill.
Self-regulated students focus on how they activate, alter, and sustain specific learning practices in social as well as solitary context" (p. 70). For example, a self-regulated

student could notice a decrease in motivation to study for a test and employ a strategy of working with a partner to increase their motivation and thus successfully complete the task. In this example, the *self* decided to use the strategy of group work to help increase motivation but did not study by them*self*.

History

The framework of self-regulated learning as we know it today has been pieced together from many different fields of psychology (Boekaerts et al., 2000). The first hints of the framework appeared in the 1960s when researchers realized that focusing only on cognitive aspects of learning did not fully explain how learning worked, leading them to combine theories of cognition with those of motivation and self-regulation (Macmillan Reference USA, 2009). In the 1970s and 1980s, researchers worked under the assumption that self-regulation was a trait that individuals either did or did not possess; it was not understood to be a skill that could be developed (Boekaerts & Corno, 2005). As interest in self-regulated learning grew into the 1990s, so did the fragmentation of the research. As Boekaerts et al. (2000) noted, researchers in different fields of psychology did not tend to communicate with each other, leading to several different definitions and models for self-regulated learning. It was during this time as well that there was a shift away from cognition and towards motivation and volitional strategies (Boekaerts & Corno, 2005). In addition, new understandings came to light, including the influence of interpersonal relationships and community norms (Clark, 2012) as well as the understanding that students can learn to develop self-regulation skills (Boekaerts & Corno, 2005; Macmillan Reference USA, 2009; Xiao & Yang, 2019). From the 2000s to the present day, the importance of self-regulated learning research has continued to grow

(Panadero, 2017) and new understandings have emerged. Researchers have now begun exploring how social-emotional factors and interpersonal relationships in a classroom influence the ability of students to self-regulate (Boekaerts & Corno, 2005).

Models of Self-Regulated Learning

Due to self-regulated learning being studied across various fields of psychology, numerous models have been developed (Boekaerts et al., 2000). While each of these models focuses on their own aspect of self-regulation, such as metacognition or motivation, there are some common assumptions that the major models share (Boekaerts & Corno, 2005). First, self-regulated learners are proactive, intentionally apply specific strategies to a learning task, know how to increase their motivation, and alter their environment to make it conducive to learning (Boekaerts & Corno, 2005; Pintrich, 2000; Macmillan Reference USA, 2009); second, while individual differences do exist, all learners have some ability to regulate their learning, motivation, and/or behavior (Boekaerts & Corno, 2005; Pintrich, 2000); third, self-regulated learners have a standard or criterion in mind when setting goals which they can then use to monitor their learning and make necessary adjustments when required (Boekaerts & Corno, 2005; Pintrich, 2000); and fourth, achievement is not linked to individual traits but instead, to the ability to self-regulate one's learning (Boekaerts & Corno, 2005; Pintrich, 2000).

Self-regulated learning can be described as a three-phase, cyclical process: planning, performance, and reflection (Xiao & Yang, 2019). While the nomenclature used varies amongst different theorists, the idea behind each phase is the same. The planning phase as described by Xiao and Yang (2019), is called the forethought phase by Zimmerman (2002) and forethought/planning/activation by Pintrich (2000). In this phase,

students prepare for learning with cognitive activities such as setting goals and accessing prior knowledge, metacognitive activities such as choosing strategies, and motivational activities such as determining their interest in and relevance of the task (Zimmerman, 2002; Pintrich, 2000).

The next phase is called performance by Zimmerman (2002) and is two distinct phases by Pintrich (2000), monitoring and control. During this phase, students perform the cognitive task of applying the strategies they identified, the metacognitive task of deciding how well they understand a concept or if their learning strategies are effective, and the motivational task of employing strategies to increase their motivation should they start to feel bored or overwhelmed (Zimmerman, 2002; Pintrich, 2000).

The last phase is called the reflection phase by Zimmerman (2002) or as named by Pintrich (2000), the reaction and reflection phase. In this phase, students perform the cognitive tasks of comparing their performance against a standard and explaining why they were successful or not with a task, an explanation which focuses more on effort and strategies than intrinsic ability (Zimmerman, 2002; Pintrich, 2000). Motivation also comes into play in this phase. When students feel positive emotions at the end of a task, their motivation for learning increases; conversely, if students were not happy with their performance, they reflect on ways they could be more successful next time (Zimmerman, 2002; Pintrich, 2000).

Characteristics of Learners

Students who are self-regulated learners exhibit many beneficial characteristics that are required to become successful lifelong learners (Seker, 2016; Xiao & Yang, 2019; Zimmerman, 2002). First, self-regulated learners are proactive instead of reactive (Seker,

2016; Xiao & Yang, 2019; Zimmerman, 2002), meaning they plan the strategies they will use based on a task and then monitor how the strategies are working for them (Seker, 2016; Zimmerman, 2002). Reactive learners, on the other hand, are more dependent on the teacher determining which strategies to use and telling them if they are using the strategy correctly (Macmillan Reference USA, 2009).

Second, self-regulated learners assess their own performance and tend to attribute both failures and successes to effort and the application of strategies; conversely, learners who are not self-regulated tend to attribute their performance to abilities (Pintrich, 2000; Zimmerman, 2002). This focus on the controllable factors of effort and strategy application leads self-regulated learners to have a greater satisfaction with the learning process which translates to a higher motivation for learning (Pintrich, 2000; Zimmerman, 2002).

Another beneficial characteristic of self-regulated learners is their ability to direct their own learning. By developing the skills to set goals, apply strategies, and monitor their learning, students are able to become aware of what they personally need to learn something new (Macmillan Reference USA, 2009; Zimmerman, 2002). Rather than a teacher differentiating instruction for 30 individual students, this empowers students to differentiate their own learning which helps ensure that all student needs are being met in the classroom (Zimmerman, 2002).

Lastly, numerous studies have shown that students who are adept at self-regulation have higher rates of academic achievement than their peers who are not self-regulated (Boekaerts & Corno, 2005; Seker, 2016; Macmillan Reference USA, 2009; Teng & Huang, 2019, Zimmerman, 2002). This has also been shown to be true within the

population of English learners. Seker (2016) conducted a study of undergraduate English learners and their use of self-regulation strategies and found higher rates of achievement in self-regulated learners than those students who were not self-regulated. In addition, in their study of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in China, Teng and Huang (2019) found that secondary EFL students were more successful when they knew which strategies were best suited to a writing task and when they were aware of their own strengths and weaknesses concerning the task.

While there are different conceptual ways to think about self-regulated learning, the end result is a student who has the skills to be a lifelong learner. Using these skills, they are able to adjust their learning strategies, manage fluctuating levels of motivation, and accurately assess their learning. The next section will look at one way to help students develop these skills of self-regulated learning: formative assessment.

Formative Assessment

Definition

If self-regulated learning is the destination we want our students to reach, formative assessment is the path they can take to get there. As stated by Panadero et al. (2018), formative assessment can help students develop self-regulation skills by focusing their attention on their goal and the steps they need to take to reach that goal. While there are various definitions of formative assessment in the literature, several characteristics are commonly noted within those definitions; it is an ongoing, cyclical process that happens during learning (Alvarez et al., 2014; Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2018; Clark, 2012; Reeves, 2011); it includes feedback that can be used by both student and teacher (Alvarez et al., 2014; Black & Wiliam, 1998; Black & Wiliam, 2009;

Brookhart et al., 2009; CCSSO, 2018; Fisher & Frey, 2014; Reeves, 2011); and it is used by students to adjust their learning methods and by teachers to adjust their teaching methods (Alvarez et al., 2014; Black & Wiliam, 1998; Clark, 2012; Fisher & Frey, 2014; Reeves, 2011).

Components of Formative Assessment

In order for formative assessment to be effective, three components must be present: there are clearly defined standards (Brookhart et al., 2009; Fisher & Frey, 2014; Sadler, 1998; Wiliam & Thompson, 2007, as cited in Black & Wiliam, 2009, p. 8); learning tasks are created to gather evidence of how students are developing towards the standard (Black & Wiliam, 1998; CCSSO, 2018; Clark, 2012; Wiliam & Thompson, 2007, as cited in Black & Wiliam, 2009, p. 8); and there is timely and actionable feedback that can be used to increase student learning (Alvarez et al., 2014; Black & Wiliam, 1998; Brookhart et al., 2009; CCSSO, 2018; Clark, 2012; Reeves, 2011; Wiliam & Thompson, 2007, as cited in Black & Wiliam, 2009, p. 8). Let us look more closely at each component in turn.

When defining standards, it is important that they are explicitly stated and given in student-friendly language (Brookhart et al., 2009; Fisher & Frey, 2014; Sadler, 1989). By doing this, students are able to become less dependent on the teacher to understand the goal of the class which in turn, will help facilitate the student developing self-monitoring skills (Sadler, 1989). Teachers also should pay special note to the difficulty level of the standard as it can affect student motivation; if the standard is perceived to be too difficult by the student, they may not try because they do not think they will be successful; if the standard is perceived to be too easy by the student, they

may not try because they do not think it is worth the effort (Sadler, 1989). Sadler (1989) describes two possible ways of defining standards. First, teachers can use descriptive statements which use words to describe what features need to be present, what quality is expected, and what is considered correct or incorrect. Second, teachers can use exemplars which give students a concrete and thus clear example of the expected final work.

The next component is creating a way to gather information about student learning, which is where the actual assessment comes into being. As opposed to summative assessment, this is not an assessment that is completed once but instead, is ongoing and can happen many times in a lesson (CCSSO, 2018; Fisher et. al., 2014). While teachers can use unplanned formative assessments to take advantage of teachable moments, it is imperative that there is a component of planned assessments as well (Alvarez et al., 2014; CCSSO, 2018). When thinking about what information to address in a formative assessment, the Council of Chief State School Officers (2018) suggests that teachers consider anticipated misconceptions, questions to ask students, and how they can meet the diverse learning needs of their students. These planned assessments can then be used by teachers and students to identify and eventually close the gap between where students currently are in their learning and where they need to be (Alvarez et al., 2014).

When gathering information about student learning, it is important to consider whether students are committing mistakes or errors. As described by Fisher and Frey (2014), a mistake is usually committed because of lack of attention on the part of the student. This being the case, the student usually knows how to fix the mistake but just needs to work on noticing it (Fisher & Frey, 2014). Errors, on the other hand, need to be

addressed through instruction since the student is usually not aware of how to correct it (Fisher & Frey, 2014). As described by Fisher and Frey (2014), these could be fact-based errors, errors in applying the facts, overgeneralization of a new skill, or a misconception created through the teaching process. By considering mistakes and errors, teachers can better determine student needs and thus make their instruction more precise (Fisher & Frey, 2014).

Once evidence of student learning is collected, feedback must be given that moves learning forward. This is a crucial step because without it, the evidence is no longer part of formative assessment but is simply data (Sadler, 1989). For feedback to be effective it first must be used to improve learning in some way, either by the student or the teacher (Sadler, 1989). It is through this feedback that the student learns what they need to continue to develop to show evidence of reaching the standard and that the teacher learns how they can support the student in this learning process (Sadler, 1989). The ultimate goal with providing feedback is for students to begin to develop self-monitoring skills so they can more accurately and independently evaluate their own work (Sadler, 1989). While individual comments are a common way to provide this feedback, Sadler (1989) suggests that using a visual feedback method on its own or with written or verbal feedback is more effective because it can avoid misunderstandings. This could be done by showing students examples of the task at different levels of development which they could then compare to their own work.

Benefits

Integrating formative assessment into the classroom can lead to several benefits. First, formative assessment is the most effective way to truly see what a student

understands or does not understand. Many times, students do not have a clear picture of what they know so simply asking the question *do you understand* will not result in an accurate answer (Fisher & Frey, 2014). Through formative assessment, students have to *show* the teacher what they know which allows the teacher to more accurately assess their learning (Fisher & Frey, 2014). Once this information is collected, it is then possible to more accurately pinpoint who needs the support, whether it is the whole class or a small group, and the form that support takes (Fisher & Frey, 2014).

Second, by making students a part of the learning processes and helping them develop their own self-monitoring skills, they become less dependent on the teacher and become more empowered in their learning process (Brookhart et al., 2009; Leenknecht et al., 2021). Teachers have also noticed that with this empowerment comes a shift in student mindset with regards to school. Brookhart noted that students begin school with a love of learning but as they move through the system, that love is replaced with a focus on grades (as cited in Brookhart et al., 2009, p. 236). Formative assessment helps students reawaken their natural love of learning and begin to develop more positive feelings about school in general (Alvarez et al., 2014; Brookhart et al., 2009; Leenknecht et al., 2021; Weurlander et al., 2012).

Through formative assessment, teachers are able to guide students to developing the skills they need to become self-regulated learners. It helps the teacher have an accurate account of student understanding which can then drive instruction. In addition, the feedback from teacher to student and student to teacher creates a cycle of assessing and learning that can empower students and help them become more independent. The

next section will discuss the population of students at the heart of this project, English learners, and ways to help these students develop more effective writing skills.

English Learners

English Learners (ELs) are defined as any student who speaks a language other than English in the home and whose English proficiency is such that they will struggle with participating in a class without support (Gottlieb, 2006; Minnesota Department of Education [MDE], 2021). However, while ELs do have these two characteristics in common, this population of students is anything but homogenous. Within this group are those born and raised in the United States as well as those who have recently arrived in this country; students who are conversationally fluent in English as well as those who are stronger in literacy; students with limited or interrupted formal education as well as those who have an educational background comparable to their peers in the United States (Alvarez et al., 2014; Gibbons, 2009; Gottlieb, 2006). That being said, each student comes into our schools with their own strengths, resources, and needs which teachers need to discover in order to know how to best support their learning (Alvarez et al., 2014).

One factor that teachers should consider when determining how to support ELs is their literacy level in their home language. Academic literacy skills are transferable, meaning any skills learned in their home language will transfer to their learning of English (Alvarez et al., 2014; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004, Olsen, 2010). This results in students with a strong literacy background in their home language progressing at a faster rate in English than those who are not literate or have low literacy in their home language (Alvarez et al., 2014; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004; Gottlieb, 2006). Another factor to

consider is possible differences between a student's home and school culture (Alvarez et al., 2014). In addition to learning a new language, students may not be aware of the culturally-based expectations associated with communication styles, how to *do school*, and the role of student and teacher (Alvarez et al., 2014; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004). This only adds to the mental load ELs face during their school day.

Long-Term English Learners

One specific population of ELs that deserves particular discussion are Long-Term English Learners (LTELs). While the Minnesota Department of Education and the federal Every Student Succeeds Act does not have an official definition for LTELs (MDE, 2021), the identifying characteristic of this population of students is that they have had formal education in the United States for over 5 years but are still not considered proficient in English (Alvarez et al., 2014; MDE, 2021; Olsen, 2010). Aside from this characteristic, LTELs have other commonalities as well. Olsen (2010) describes LTELs as being students who tend to struggle academically, have high social language skills but lower academic language skills, whose English proficiency has plateaued at the intermediate level, who are often described as quiet and unengaged learners, and who have gaps in literacy skills and content knowledge.

To meet the unique needs of LTELs and set them up for success in the future, there are several things a school, and teachers, can do. First, the school should consider supporting LTELs' literacy development in their home language (Clark-Gareca et al., 2019; Olsen, 2010). Since literacy skills are transferable, helping a student develop home language literacy skills will help them with their English literacy skills as well (Alvarez et al., 2014; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004; Olsen, 2010). Clark-Gareca et al. (2019) suggest

that this type of support be provided in the form of language arts classes in students' home language or, if this is not possible, by providing and/or allowing bilingual content to be used in class. This type of support creates an asset-based focus that incorporates the strengths and knowledge a student has in their own language and culture (Clark-Gareca et al., 2019).

Second, every teacher, not just the EL teachers, needs to focus on incorporating language development into their lessons (Clark-Gareca et al., 2019; Olsen, 2010). Since teacher programs may not include a language development component, schools should consider providing and/or requiring professional development to give teachers the skills they need to develop this teaching lens (Clark-Gareca et al., 2019). Doing so will ensure students are receiving language support throughout the day rather than for just an hour in their English language development classes.

Third, teachers can incorporate different instructional strategies to ensure the content is accessible to LTELs (Clark-Gareca et al., 2019). These strategies could include differentiation, by providing texts at different reading levels and having multiple points of entry for content, as well as scaffolding, which ensures students are being challenged but not to the point of being overwhelmed (Clark-Gareca et al., 2019). As Olsen (2010) notes, when providing these supports, the rigor needs to be maintained as opposed to simplified in order to overcome any gaps and ensure their continued growth.

Lastly, teachers can help students take a more active role in their education (Olsen, 2010). By having a conversation about post-high school goals, teachers can help advise students on whichever path they would like to take in life, thus increasing motivation (Clark-Gareca et al., 2019; Olsen, 2010). This could include taking

career-focused classes the school provides (Clark-Gareca et al., 2019) or if college is the goal, helping students see what they need to do in high school to go to college in the future (Olsen, 2010). More immediately, teachers can help students develop study and organizational skills that will help them no matter their path in life (Olsen, 2010).

Dual-Identified Students

Another population that requires special consideration are ELs with learning disabilities, also known as dual-identified students (Carnock & Silva, 2019). While being an EL is not a disability, the behaviors a student exhibits while learning a language are often very similar to the behaviors exhibited due to a learning disability (Carnock & Silva, 2019). This is especially true for literacy-based disabilities, also called Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) (WIDA Consortium, 2017). The Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (2014) defines an SLD as "a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations" (§300.8 [c] [10]). This overlap has led to ELs being both over and under represented in special education (Carnock & Silva, 2019; WIDA Consortium, 2017; Zacarian, 2011). Using data collected from IDEA Data Center (2015), WIDA Consortium (2017) found that in 2014, an average of 50% of ELs were also diagnosed with an SLD whereas non-ELs had a 39% rate of diagnosis. Zacarian (2011) posits that these cases of underrepresentation can be due to schools assuming that learning struggles are due only language and thus waiting too long to refer a student to SPED; overrepresentation, on the other hand, Zacarian (2011) believes is due to a "lack

of training, familiarity, and preparedness to teach diverse populations of students" (p. 131).

When a student is dual-identified, collaboration, problem-solving, and an asset-based mindset are needed to find the most effective way to support the student. Through collaboration at the department level, the EL and SPED teachers will be better able to fully understand the needs of the student (Carnock & Silva, 2019; Mathews, 2016). This process will enable EL teachers to learn more about supporting students with learning disabilities and SPED teachers to learn more about supporting the language development of students (Mathews, 2016).

To support a student on an individual basis, an effective strategy to use is taking a problem approach (ColorinColorado, 2016c). With this strategy, the teacher breaks down an activity into smaller parts in order to determine where the student is getting stuck. This will help determine if the learning struggle is due more to language development or learning disability (ColorinColorado, 2016a; ColorinColorado, 2016c). Once this determination is made, teachers can then decide which tool, resource, or instruction best meet the needs of the student (ColorinColorado, 2016a).

Lastly, an assets-based mindset is required to best support students with exceptionalities. This mindset is characterized by focusing and building on what students *can do* rather than what they cannot yet do (Carnock & Silva, 2019; ColorinColorado, 2016b). By determining the strengths a student possesses in all areas of their lives, not just language or academic strengths, teachers can build upon them which helps increase student learning while also building confidence in their abilities (Lalor, 2021).

Teaching Writing to ELs

There are four language domains - listening, speaking, reading, and writing - and out of those, writing has proven to be the most difficult for ELs to acquire (Chamot, 2005). Before we can discuss how to effectively teach writing to ELs, we must understand the history of how people have approached teaching writing. The first research about teaching writing to language learners came about in the 1980s and used research in first language research as its basis (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004). While there is still no comprehensive theory of how to teach writing to language learners, we can trace the trends in how writing is taught (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004).

Approaches to Teaching Writing

Product oriented writing approaches were the basis of how writing was taught in the early 20th century up through the 1960s and the goal of writing at this time was for students to use writing as a way to demonstrate their content knowledge as opposed to the skills they have in writing itself (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004). Students learned to write using explicit rules, outlines and templates and their writings were focused mainly on analyzing readings (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004).

From the 1960s-1980s, a process oriented approach emerged (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004). The goal with this approach was for students to use writing to express their individual ideas and develop their own voice as a writer (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004). Followers of this approach fell into two different camps: expressivists focused more on writing as a creative endeavor and a way to self-discovery while cognitivists focused on learning the explicit stages of writing, such as planning, drafting, revision, and receiving feedback (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004).

From the 1980s to present day, a post process approach has driven instruction (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004). The approach was developed to acknowledge the effect culture has on the writing process and with the specific needs of language learners in mind (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004). In addition, it brought back a focus on product and how to express one's ideas in the target language while deprioritizing the development of writing voice (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004). Researchers realized that the process oriented approach relied on implicit cultural knowledge and thus put language learners at a disadvantage (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004). As such, the post-process approach has the goal of making how to write in different genres or text types for different audiences more explicit (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004).

Making Writing Explicit

The focus post process approach puts on making writing explicit is one of the biggest factors in helping ELs become better writers. Specifically, teachers need to focus on two areas of writing: features and strategies. When teaching writing features, teachers should consider not only the language forms students will use but how to help them adjust their writing purpose to the task and audience and how to effectively organize their paper according to genre (Gibbons, 2009). ELs who are literate in their home language may have skills they can transfer into English but, with writing conventions being culturally based, it should not be assumed that a direct transfer is possible (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004; Gibbons, 2009). Cultural differences in writing make it very important for teachers to also consider the different social purposes of writing and how those purposes affect structure and language features (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004; Gibbons, 2009). For ELs who are not literate in their home language, making the writing process

explicit is even more important since they do not have pre-learned skills they can draw on. For these students, teachers need to provide support more in learning how to structure, plan, and revise their writing and less on the mechanics of writing (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004).

The second area teachers should make explicit is writing strategies. Teaching writing strategies to students is beneficial not only because it will help ELs become more effective writers but will help them become more independent as well (Chamot, 2005). Macaro (2001, as cited in Chamot, 2005, p.121-122) found the benefit of teaching writing strategies in his study of secondary students in the UK who were learning French. Over the course of five months, the students were taught a variety of writing strategies which included the stages of planning, monitoring, and evaluation and at the end of his study, he found that students showed improvement in correct grammar use and an increase in both writing independence and working more carefully (Chamot, 2005). Gibbons (2009) also noted that when teaching strategies, teachers should include how to find and use writing resources which would help students become more independent learners (Gibbons, 2009). In summary, teaching writing strategies help ELs become more effective writers because it helps them shift from focusing on mechanics to focusing on meaning; from writing in one style only to writing in the style appropriate to the task; and from struggling to assess and edit their own writing to proactively finding models that they can learn from (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004; Gibbons, 2009).

Teaching Writing Strategies

To help students develop the ability to independently use a writing strategy, teachers must do more than just asking them to use it (Chamot, 2005). The first factor

teachers must consider is which strategies students are currently using and why they have chosen them (Chamot, 2005). Once that is determined, teachers can show students how to improve upon their current strategies or adopt new ones through modeling their use, doing think-alouds, and by guiding students in both practice and self-evaluation, techniques which have been shown to help students develop their metacognitive knowledge (Chamot, 2005). In addition, since each student comes with individual strengths and learning styles, Chamot (2005) notes how imperative it is that teachers give students the opportunity to experiment with different strategies and even develop their own. This is especially important for ELs since the strategy that a learner uses is based not only on the learning context, but on personal and cultural factors as well (Chamot, 2005).

Providing Feedback

When providing feedback to ELs on their writing, there are certain considerations teachers must make to ensure it is actionable by students. First, when a student makes an error, teachers need to determine if it is a knowledge error or a detection error (Lee, 1997). For instance, it is possible that a student knows the rules of capitalization but fails to apply them. In this case, teaching the student capitalization rules will not help them correct their errors; instead, they need support in applying the rules to their writing. Second, teachers need to consider the language they use in the feedback, especially if the feedback is given in the form of symbols or correction codes (Lee, 1997). If students do not have a strong grasp of the grammatical term or symbol being used, it will be very difficult for them to make the suggested changes (Lee, 1997). Third, teachers should be deliberate in the types of errors they are correcting since correcting all errors is

impractical for the teacher and overwhelming for the student. (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004; Lee, 1997). In general, ELs need more help with comprehension or logic errors than they do mechanics errors so more time should be devoted to the former (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004; Lee, 1997). The last consideration is using questions as feedback (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004; Lee, 1997). Due to differences in communication styles, questions as feedback could sometimes lead to unexpected outcomes, such as students answering the question but not making corrections or students thinking the question means the teacher does not know the answer (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004). While questions can be used as feedback, teachers need to be aware that they could lead to miscommunication so to be very deliberate in how the questions are stated or to explicitly teach students how to handle different types of feedback (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004).

To support ELs on their writing path, being explicit is the key. Teachers need to consider the background of their students and the experiences and skills they have in their home language, using these strengths as a bridge to their developing these skills in English. The focus should be on not just language features but on writing features, strategies, and each step of the writing process as well. The next section will look more closely at the cultural backgrounds of students and how cultural differences can be used as a resource to help students succeed.

Cultural Considerations

When working with students from various cultures, it is important not only to consider their language skills and educational background but also their home culture. The education system in the United States reflects a White, middle-class, individualist culture (Schlosser, 1992). When a student does not come from this culture, there is often

a conflict between values taught at home and values taught at school, a conflict that Ibarra (2001, as cited in DeCapua & Marshall, 2011, p. 36) terms *cultural dissonance.* When students experience cultural dissonance, they often struggle with misbehavior, have lower levels of participation in class, may feel alienated or isolated, and tend to have poorer academic performance (Schlosser, 1992). To know how to lessen the cultural dissonance a student experiences in school, one must first understand the cultural differences that exist.

Western Education

Western education emphasizes three main skills for its students: literacy (Miettinen, 1999, as cited in DeCapua, 2016, p. 227), academic thinking (DeCapua & Marshall, 2011), and independent learning (DeCapua, 2016; DeCapua & Marshall, 2011; Ho & Crookall, 1995). While the goal of the education system is to prepare students for life after school (DeCapua & Marshall, 2011), it also separates learning from day-to-day activities (Miettinen, 1999, as cited in DeCapua, 2016, p. 227). Connected to this, there is also a separation between teacher and student, with teachers not being considered part of a students' close social network (Paris, 2012, as cited in DeCapua, 2016, p. 227).

Western education also reflects values of an individualist culture. The focus in this type of culture is the individual person (Oyserman & Lee, 2008); self-concept is formed through one's own traits and achievements and well-being is found through self-fulfillment and personal success (DeCapua & Marshall, 2011; Oyserman & Lee, 2008). In addition, it is acceptable and expected for an individual to only have obligations to themselves, leading to a desire to distinguish oneself from others (Oyserman & Lee, 2008).

Non-Western Education

Compared to Western education, Non-Western education emphasizes orality over literacy (DeCapua, 2016; DeCapua & Marshall, 2011) practical knowledge over academic thinking (Cole, 2005, as cited in DeCapua, 2016, p. 229; DeCapua & Marshall, 2011), and collaborative learning over independent learning (DeCapua, 2016; DeCapua & Marshall, 2011). Because the goal of Non-Western education is more pragmatic than academic, learning is often less formal and focused more on daily life skills (Cole, 2005, as cited in DeCapua, 2016, p. 229). As is similar with Western education, this characteristic impacts the student-teacher relationship although in the opposite way; teachers are integral members of students' communities and often have close relationships with their students (DeCapua, 2016; Gaskins, 1999, as cited in DeCapua, 2016, p. 227).

The emphasis on community and collaboration of many Non-Western cultures also reflects the values of collectivist cultures. The focus in this type of culture is not on the individual, but the group (DeCapua & Marshall, 2011; Oyserman & Lee, 2008). Because of this, self-concept is formed through one's social relationships and well-being is found by fulfilling one's social obligations as well as through the success of your social groups (Oyserman & Lee, 2008). With this emphasis on relationships, there is a focus on compromising, connecting and fitting-in to one's social group, as opposed to standing out from it as found in individualist cultures (Oyserman & Lee, 2008).

Implications for Teaching

When students come from a different cultural background than that of the school's, DeCapua and Marshall (2011) recommend following the Mutually Adaptive

Language Paradigm (MALP®) to lessen the cultural dissonance students experience. Being mutually adaptive means that both teachers and students make changes to their cultural norms, resulting in an environment where students feel connected, are more engaged in their learning, and are better able to succeed (DeCapua, 2016). When effectively implemented, MALP helps students gradually transition to the more individualist culture of the U.S. school system by using their own collectivist cultural values as a base (DeCapua & Marshall, 2009; DeCapua & Marshall, 2011).

The first component of MALP is to focus on relationship building both with and between students (DeCapua, 2016; DeCapua & Marshall, 2009; DeCapua & Marshall, 2011; Schlosser, 1992). By learning about students' personal lives and home cultures while sharing about their own, teachers create an environment that focuses on the collectivist value of connection (DeCapua & Marshall, 2011; Schlosser, 1992) and create an environment where students feel safe, supported, and respected (DeCapua, 2016). This lessens the feelings of alienation students often experience due to cultural dissonance by giving them a sense of belonging (DeCapua, 2016). In addition, by getting to know students on a more personal level, teachers are able to determine if students need emotional or other non-academic support, thus focusing on the needs of the whole child (DeCapua, 2016).

The second component of MALP is to incorporate elements of collectivist cultures into the classroom (DeCapua & Marshall, 2009). One way to do this is by creating learning opportunities that use both group collaboration and individual accountability (DeCapua, 2016; DeCapua & Marshall, 2009; DeCapua & Marshall, 2011). For example, students can collaborate on a project together and then individually

share a section of the work with the class (DeCapua & Marshall, 2011). Through this structure, students begin learning with a more familiar collaborative format and then transition to the new individualist format emphasized in U.S. schools.

Another way to combine the cultures is through oral and written work (DeCapua & Marshall, 2009). Because students from collectivist cultures are used to more oral-based traditions, it is important to give them the opportunity to express and receive knowledge both orally and in written form (DeCapua, 2016; DeCapua & Marshall, 2011). By reading a text aloud while following along, teachers help students transition to a more literacy-based school culture while using their orality-based culture as a support (DeCapua, 2016; DeCapua & Marshall, 2011).

The third component of MALP is explicitly teaching academic tasks in isolation (DeCapua, 2016; DeCapua & Marshall, 2009; DeCapua & Marshall, 2011). With the emphasis on practical and hands-on learning, students from collectivist cultures often do not have much experience with academic tasks (DeCapua, 2016). This requires not only that academic tasks are explicitly taught by the teacher, but that the tasks are the only new component being taught (DeCapua, 2016; DeCapua & Marshall, 2009; DeCapua & Marshall, 2011). In other words, the language and content being used for the task should be already known to students, allowing them to focus completely on the new academic task being learned (DeCapua, 2016; DeCapua & Marshall, 2009; DeCapua & Marshall, 2011). DeCapua and Marshall (2011) provide an example of this where a math teacher wanted students to compare and contrast different math concepts using a Venn diagram. Before completing that task, however, the teacher had them do a Venn diagram with personal information, the context and language with which they were already familiar.

Once they had practiced the Venn diagram with the known language and context, they completed it using the target math concepts.

As stated by Ho and Crookall (1995), the culture students live outside of the classroom affects the culture inside the classroom. To reduce the cultural dissonance students experience through these differences, teachers need to first acknowledge that differences exist and then take steps to reduce the dissonance experienced by students. This can be done by focusing on relationships, using the values of students' home cultures as a way to learn the values of the U.S. school culture, and to explicitly teach the academic skills required for success in school.

Summary

In this chapter, four components of the research question—*how can formative assessments help high school English learners self-regulate their development in writing?*—were discussed: self-regulated learning, formative assessment, English learners, and cultural considerations. The literature review showed how self-regulated learning, driven by formative assessment, can aid students in becoming lifelong, independent learners. It also showed how explicitness is the key to helping English learners become effective writers who are able to independently use and find strategies to improve their writing. Lastly, it discussed the importance of lessening the cultural dissonance students experience in school through building class relationships, incorporating aspects of student cultures into the classroom, and explicitly teaching academic skills in isolation. These learnings will be the basis of my capstone project which will be discussed in Chapter Three. The project will focus on the development of a writing rubric for ELs that can be used in a formative way, the creation of instructional

videos that will guide students through the rubric on their way to proficiency, and supplementary materials to help students develop skills in the self-regulated learning cycle.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

Overview

The goal of my project is to answer the question: *how can formative assessments help high school English learners self-regulate their development in writing?* In Chapter Two, I explored four components of this research question: self-regulated learners, formative assessments, teaching writing to English learners, and cultural considerations. In this chapter, I will discuss the process I will take to apply my learnings in a practical way by delineating the steps of my project, providing a rationale for the format, specifying the participants and setting, providing a timeline for implementation, and describing how I will assess the end result.

Project Description

For this capstone project, I created a HyperRubric, instructional videos, and supplementary resources that will be used in a high school Academic Writing class for English learners. There are three types of resources embedded within the rubric; first, each standard has an overview video sourced from the internet or created by myself; second, I created instructional exemplar videos to model for students how to move their writing up the learning progression; and third, when applicable, I created reference documents to aid students in their revisions.

The framework that is guiding my project is the self-regulated learning model discussed in Chapter Two. As mentioned by Boekaerts et al. (2000), there are several iterations of the self-regulated learning model due to it spanning many fields of

psychology. For the purposes of this project, I am drawing on the models of Zimmerman (2002) and Pintrich (2000), being that they are two of the most cited models in the literature. I will use this framework to ensure my project can be used to help students through the three stages of self-regulated learning, as described by Xiao and Yang, (2019): planning, performance, and reflection.

The first step in my project was to analyze examples of student work to determine in which areas of language and content students struggle the most. Since school is not currently in session, I did this by looking at the scores students received on the previous year's personal narrative unit which had thirteen total standards covering the following areas: small moment, strong lead, exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, conclusion, figurative language, sensory language, adverbs of time, adverbs of sequence, dialogue, and formatting. For each standard, I recorded the score each student received and then calculated the average score for all of my students. Through this analysis, I noticed that students struggled most with writing a strong lead (1.2 out of 4), figurative language (1.6 out of 4) and sensory language (1.5 out of 4).

My next step was to cross-reference my standards with the Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards for English Language Arts (2010) and the WIDA Key Language Uses (WIDA Consortium, 2020) to finalize the language and content standards for the unit. This cross-reference combined with my analysis of past student work led me to reduce the standards from thirteen to eight. I removed the figurative language standard so students could focus on sensory language; I combined standards on adverbs of time and adverbs of sequence to one covering connectors in general; and I combined standards covering rising action, climax, and falling action into one and named it *description of*

events. My hope with these changes was to make the standards less daunting for students while still covering the principal characteristics of a personal narrative.

With the standards defined, I created a draft of the rubric as well as exemplars for each level. For each standard, I described what students *can do* at each of the four levels of the learning progression. To help me determine this, I referenced past student work to see the patterns in student understanding. This also helped me create exemplars that demonstrated each level of the learning progression and which would become the basis for the instructional videos.

Next, I began the process of making my rubric a HyperRubic. First, I searched for videos online that could serve as an overview lesson for each of the standards. When an appropriate video did not exist, I created one myself. Then, using the exemplars I had already written, I created screencasts that modeled for students how to move their writing to the next level in the learning progression. Once the videos were complete, I hyperlinked them into my rubric, effectively creating a HyperRubric that students can use to drive their learning.

The last step in my project was to create supplementary materials to support students in their development of self-regulated learning skills. I did this by creating a planning and reflection document that students will use when revising their draft. The document requires students to set a focused goal for their revisions, identify the specific changes they will make, reflect on the type of support and/or environment that would help them succeed. Once the revisions are done, they then have to explain how they met their goal using evidence from their draft and the rubric.

Rationale

HyperRubrics are an assessment tool that was created by Language Arts teachers Jeff Frieden and Tyler Rablin as a more dynamic form of the traditional rubric. Rather than being focused on the number of errors students are making for each standard, the HyperRubric focuses on the learning progression students go through while mastering the standard. This removes unclear modifiers such as *somewhat* and *mostly* and replaces them with concrete skills based on Bloom's Taxonomy (Gonzalez, 2021). Frieden noted that traditional rubrics were not very helpful to students and the deficit language used often led to students feeling stigmatized and unmotivated (Gonzalez, 2021). Using *can do* statements, however, helped students focus on the process of learning and thus removed this stigmatization (Gonzalez, 2021).

My reasoning for using HyperRubrics as the basis of my project was because they exhibit the three characteristics of effective formative assignment as described in the literature. First, effective formative assessments use clearly defined standards (Brookhard et al., 2009; Sadler, 1998; William and Thompson, 2007, as cited in Black & Wiliam, 2009, p. 8). The HyperRubric exhibits this by using learning progressions and *can do* statements so students know the exact skills they currently have and the skills for which they can strive. The second characteristic is that effective formative assessments help teachers see how students are developing towards the standard (Black & Wiliam, 1998; CCSSO, 2018; Clark, 2012; Wiliam & Thompson, 2007, as cited in Black & Wiliam, 2009, p. 8). HyperRubrics meet this characteristic by assessing students throughout the writing process and skill development, allowing both teachers and students to see if progress has stalled or is still being made. Lastly, effective formative assessments employ

timely and actionable feedback that both teachers and students can use to increase student learning (Alvarez et al., 2014; Black & Wiliam, 1998; Brookhart et al., 2009; CCSSO, 2018; Clark, 2012; Reeves, 2011; Wiliam & Thompson, 2007, as cited in Black & Wiliam, 2009, p. 8). HyperRubrics are able to do this because after each assessment, students are immediately able to see where their current skill level is and can use the linked resources right away to start developing the skills needed to move up the learning progression. This also helps teachers by tracking how students are progressing, information that can then be used to create additional mini-lessons or other supports as needed.

HyperRubrics are also well-suited to the needs of English learners. The assets-based statements they use directly align with the philosophy WIDA uses to direct their support for English learners. As stated in the WIDA Can Do Philosophy (2019), “By focusing on what language learners can do, we send a powerful message that students from diverse linguistic, cultural, and experiential backgrounds contribute to the vibrancy of our early childhood programs and K–12 schools” (p. 1). This philosophy is reflected in the standards, assessments, and professional development that WIDA publishes to help teachers better meet the needs of English learners (WIDA Consortium, 2019).

Lastly, HyperRubrics are flexible to the needs of the class as well as the individual learner. This is especially important for ELs since they come to school with different writing experiences, cultural backgrounds, and home language literacy levels. Through an analysis of students’ first drafts, teachers are able to tailor the rubric to the needs of the class and incorporate the areas of writing in which ELs need the most support, such as writing features (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004; Gibbons, 2009) and writing

strategies (Chamot, 2005; Gibbons, 2009). Having concrete language standards on which to focus also makes assessing student work more practical for the teacher and more manageable for the student (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004; Lee, 1997).

Participants and Setting

My project will be implemented in a public high school in Minnesota that is located in a metropolitan area of 194,418 people. The high school, which is one of two in the district, serves around 1300 students, 294 of which are English learners (ELs). Looking specifically at the home languages of the ELs, Somali is the largest with 229 speakers and Spanish is the second most common at 68 speakers.

The English language proficiency of students is measured annually using the WIDA ACCESS test. The test assesses students' proficiency in the domains of listening, reading, speaking, and writing and uses a scoring system of 1-6, with 1 being a beginning English proficiency and 6 being as-proficient-as-peers. To exit out of EL service, students are required to earn a composite score of 4.5 and no less than 3.5 on all four domains. Looking at the scores of our students from the 2021 WIDA ACCESS test, 68 students earned a composite score of one, 54 earned a composite score of two, 102 earned a composite score of three, 42 earned a composite score of four, and three earned a composite score of five.

The specific class in which I will use my project is Academic Writing which is a class specifically for ELs. Students are assigned to this class based on their academic history, teacher recommendation, and having a writing score of 2.4-4.0. During SY 2021-22, classes were composed of 9-13 students and there were representatives from grades 9 to 12. Many of these students are also considered long-term English learners

(LTELs) because, as defined by the Minnesota Department of Education (2021), they have been in the United States for five years but have not yet reached proficiency. I chose this class in which to implement my project because, as described by Olsen (2010) and as I have observed in my own students, LTELs often have developed passive roles in their education and with their diverse backgrounds come diverse needs concerning their academic language skills. With a focus on helping students take a more active role in their learning, while also being flexible to their differing needs, my project is constructed especially with LTELs in mind.

Timeline

I will implement my project during SY 2022-23 during Trimester 1 for my Academic Writing classes. During our first unit on narrative writing, students will complete their first draft which will help me see if I need to alter the standards to better meet their specific needs. We will then begin a cycle of learning, practicing, and revising, during which I will embed individual writing conferences, small group instruction, and full group instruction as needed. Based on the previous year's timeline, I anticipate the unit will last 4-6 weeks.

Assessment

The assessment for my project centers on measuring my students' self-perceived abilities to regulate their learning as well as their general attitudes towards learning. I will give students a qualitative questionnaire, as shown in APPENDIX A, that will collect baseline data about their skills and attitudes. The same questionnaire will be given at the beginning of Trimesters 2 and 3 as well as the end of the year. Based on my classes this year, I anticipate some change in the roster throughout the year but I also expect the

majority of students to be in my class for the entire school year. My intent is to focus my assessment on the students who have been with me all year since adopting new learning habits and mindsets can be a long process.

Summary

This chapter outlined the creation and implementation of HyperRubrics for my Academic Writing class which will help me answer the question: *how can formative assessments help high school English learners self-regulate their development in writing?* It described how HyperRubrics align with the recommendations in the literature surrounding formative assessment and best practices for teaching writing to English learners. It also detailed the steps to the project, the participants and setting, timeline for implementation, and how I will go about assessing my project.

In Chapter Four, I will reflect on the process of creating this capstone project. I will discuss what I learned and the new understandings I gained through the literature review process. I will also address the limitations of my research and the possible implications it has on policy. Lastly, I will explore possibilities for subsequent research and detail how my project could benefit other teaching professionals.

CHAPTER 4

Conclusion

Overview

My experience teaching high school Academic Writing for two years helped me see a growing need to shift the focus of my teaching. My students struggled with the writing process, seeing their first draft as their last draft; their motivation seemed to be tied to whether or not an assignment or activity was graded; and the majority of my students were interested only in doing enough to pass the class, rather than expanding their knowledge and writing skills. By reflecting on my teaching and class format, I realized their mindset was coming from being in an educational system that focuses on the product instead of the process. They had been conditioned to only care about graded assignments because those were the only ones that affected their grade in the class. When I learned about HyperRubrics during a PD, I began to see how this tool could be used to help my students shift their focus from product to process while also helping them take a more active role in their learning. This is how my research question, *how can formative assessments help high school English learners self-regulate their development in writing*, came to be.

In this chapter, I will first discuss the major learnings I had while going through this capstone project, both in terms of process and content. I will specify what I gleaned from my research experience as well as which resources I found particularly helpful and that impacted my project's direction. Next, I will explore the implications and limitations of my research as well as suggest ways it could be expanded in the future. Lastly, I will

describe how I plan to share my project with others and the ways it could benefit the teaching profession.

Major Learnings

I entered into this process excited and trepidatious; excited because I had several ideas percolating that would help me better support my students and trepidatious because it would be the most in depth and lengthy project of my academic career. While I have understandably had many different learnings throughout these past several months, the two most impactful were my introduction to self-regulated learning theory and learning to trust the process.

Before I discovered the theory of self-regulated learning, I felt like my research interests lacked focus. I knew I wanted my work to apply to high school English learners but I also wanted to incorporate writing, growth mindset, engagement, motivation, and shifting student focus from grades to learning. Putting all of those ideas into a concise research question, however, proved difficult. This changed once I began my initial exploration of these topics. In both articles and dissertations, I kept coming across the term *self-regulated learning*. I got curious and explored it further. While reading a basic description of the theory, all the ideas swirling in my mind came together. The theory of self-regulated learning encapsulated the topics of most interest to me - motivation, engagement, active learning, and growth mindset - and finding this theory allowed me to weave these topics together into a cohesive research question. In addition, as I learned more about the theory, I saw how it could be a base upon which to build my rubric and eventually, structure my class.

I decided to begin my research with self-regulated learning because it was both the topic with which I was most unfamiliar and the topic that was at the heart of my research question. Having very minimal prior knowledge of the theory, however, made the research process feel like I was walking around in the dark; I was unsure about where I was going and could only see what was right in front of me. Being someone who likes to have a plan or an outline, especially when it comes to writing, this was not a comfortable situation for me to be in. I reminded myself that I was learning, analyzing, and reflecting all at the same time so I was bound to feel overwhelmed and lost. I learned to trust that even if I did not know what the outcome of my research would be in that moment, I would eventually, and that this was just the first step in a long process.

Revisiting the Literature Review

At the start of my capstone project, I envisioned a rubric that broke down each standard into a clear learning progression. Each step of the progression would have embedded into it several resources (videos, self-assessments, websites, etc.) created by myself or published on the internet. Students would be able to use these resources to independently gain the skills needed to move their writing to the next level. During my research on effective formative assessment, however, this vision changed; instead of a compilation of resources, my idea shifted to creating instructional videos that modeled for students how to move their writing from one level to the next.

The first resource that altered my vision for my project was Sadler's *Formative assessment and the design of instructional systems* (1989). The article confirmed for me that clear, descriptive standards in student-friendly language would be the most effective and helpful for students; however, I also was drawn to Sadler's (1989) suggestion of

pairing descriptive standards with exemplars as a way to bring the standards alive. This suggestion contributed to my decision to create instructional videos at each level of the learning progression, providing both an exemplar and demonstration of how students could develop their writing.

Another resource that impacted my decision to create exemplar videos was Chamot's *Language learning strategy instruction: Current issues and research* (2005). The article discussed effective language learning strategies and included information on the writing domain specifically. When teaching writing strategies, Chamot (2005) underlined the importance of modeling, think-alouds, and helping students develop self-evaluation skills. In my videos, I provide these supports by walking students through the process of revising their writing both by doing (modeling) and saying (think-alouds). In addition, comparing their own work to the exemplars will help students strengthen their self-evaluation skills.

Implications

My current school district has a large population of English learners so much of our professional development (PD) includes how to best meet the needs of this subgroup of students. In addition, during SY 2021-2022 we had several PDs that focused on assessments and clarity in grading to ensure our grading was transparent, effective, and aligned. The HyperRubic is a format that could be applied to any content area to meet these three goals. It is transparent because the descriptive nature of the HyperRubric allows students to clearly see what skills and knowledge they currently exhibit while also helping them see the path to proficiency; it is effective because it uses student-friendly language that focuses on the learning progression as opposed to vague modifiers; and it

helps with alignment because course-alike teachers can work together to create the rubric and then all can use it to structure their classes.

Limitations

One limitation of this project is with regards to timing. While I have been working on my project during SY 2021-2022, I will be implementing it in SY 2022-2023. Because of this, the student writing samples on which my rubric was based were from my SY 2021-2022 students. If my students in the upcoming school year have significantly different writing needs, then I may need to revise the standards and rubric to better support their growth.

Another limitation is that this type of rubric requires a substantial amount of pre-planning and preparation. While I had attempted to implement a full HyperRubric during SY 2021-2022, I found that I did not have the time needed, especially considering it was my first year teaching at my current high school. Working on the HyperRubric and preparing the support videos over the summer provided the time I lacked during the school year. Therefore, creating a year-long curriculum that uses HyperRurbics for each unit could take several years to complete.

One possible way to meet this goal during the school year as opposed to over the summer is to introduce just one standard of the rubric at a time to students. Aside from reducing the teacher workload to a more practical level, this would have the added benefit of not overwhelming students with too much information at one time. In addition, course-alike teachers could split the workload so the rubric could be completed within a shorter time-frame.

Future Projects and Research

The HyperRubric for my project was specifically created for our first major writing unit of the year, the personal narrative. My goal as I go forward is to create similar rubrics designed for our three additional units which cover writing to inform, explain, and argue. By implementing the HyperRubric format for a school year with the same group of students, I will be able to see if it had the intended effect of increasing their self-regulated learning skills. I will measure this change by administering the *Self-regulated learning strategies questionnaire* (APPENDIX A) to students at the beginning of each trimester and at the end of the year.

When used in a formative way, the HyperRubric can help students shift their mindset from *focus on product* to *focus on process*; however, one area of self-regulated learning that I believe needs further research is motivation. Whether it is due to past challenges with writing, self-perceived lack of writing skills, or other negative associations with writing, one of the biggest hurdles my students have faced is not being motivated to work through the writing process. At its mildest, this results in students turning in a first draft as a final; at its strongest, this results in students who do not turn in a writing assignment all year. This being the case, even if the HyperRubric has the potential to help students develop into more self-regulated learners, if they are not motivated to do so, then change will not be possible. Therefore, I am interested in learning about how to help students who struggle with motivation, specifically reluctant writers, so they can begin to tap into the writing powers they have yet to discover.

Communicating Results

When my research for this capstone project began in Spring 2022, I discussed my research question with my Academic Writing Professional Learning Team (PLT). The PLT was composed of the Academic Writing teachers that are located in our district's three high schools. Now that my capstone project is complete, I intend to meet with them to share my findings and the possible benefits of the HyperRubric format for our students. While one benefit of the rubric could be helping us differentiate instruction for our students, another is that it could help us better align our classes across the district by ensuring that we are focusing on the same standards for each unit.

After I have used the HyperRubric format for a full school year, I would like to extend my audience by sharing my experience with our school's EL team who could implement it both in the classes they teach individually and in their co-taught content classes as well. Teaching with this new format for a full school year would make me better able to understand and explain how it could be adapted for other classes. Through my *Self-regulated learning strategies questionnaire* (APPENDIX A), I would also have data to support my claim that the use of HyperRubrics in a formative way can increase self-regulated learning in students.

Benefits to the Profession

During the previous school year, my fellow Academic Writing teachers and I noticed that while some of our students were ready for the rigor of our class, many were not. This led to several discussions about how we could make our curriculum more accessible to our students while still making our writing expectations clear. This rubric could be one way to do just that.

Because of its use of an assets-based learning progression, using the HyperRubric in a formative way can help students clearly see where their writing skills currently are while at the same time, making their path to proficiency more transparent than a traditional rubric would. In addition, for students who are ready for more independent learning, the hyperlinks embedded within the rubric give them the tools needed to explore a new writing skill on their own.

From a teaching standpoint, the HyperRubric can help teachers better support learners by facilitating highly focused, small group instruction based on where students fall in the learning progression. In addition, teachers can use it to help students build skills in goal setting and reflection which, when done consistently, would help students shift their mindset from a *focus on product* to a *focus on process*. This would have the added benefit of setting them on the path to develop the lifelong learning skills that we, as a profession, want to help our students attain.

Summary

This chapter reflected on the process of researching and creating a HyperRubric that sought to answer the question: *how can formative assessments help high school English learners self-regulate their development in writing?* I began by explaining the impact the theory of self-regulated learning had on my research and how this experience helped me learn to trust the process; I revisited the connections I made between my project format and the research of Sadler (1989) and Chamot (2005); and I discussed the limitations of my research as well as how it can be used in the future by both myself and other teaching professionals.

This project began with a desire to better understand my students so I can in turn, better support them as writers and individuals. While my past use of sports metaphors, reflection activities, and mini-lessons on growth mindset temporarily helped them shift their focus from gaining points to gaining knowledge, I knew that to have a lasting impact, a systemic change would be needed. Through this project, I learned about teaching practices that can help guide students, specifically English learners, to become more self-regulated writers and how the HyperRubric format can facilitate this development. I look forward to exploring this new way of learning with my students and continuing to reflect on and refine my teaching practices to better support my learners.

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APPENDIX A

Self-regulated learning strategies questionnaire

Text Processing

1. I correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation mistakes marked by Google Docs.
2. I check that each paragraph is organized around one topic sentence.
3. I check that I have followed a specific structure when writing.

Idea Planning

1. Before writing, I brainstorm the topic to help me decide what to write.
2. Before writing, I create an outline to organize my ideas.

Goal-oriented Monitoring and Evaluating

1. I set writing goals for myself at the beginning of each class or unit.
2. I check my process towards my goals while writing.

Peer Learning

1. I brainstorm with my peers to help me write.
2. When I'm stuck, I talk with my peers to help give me ideas.

Feedback Handling

1. I want to receive feedback on my writing.
2. I use feedback from the teacher and peers to improve my writing.

Interest Enhancement

1. I choose topics I am interested in writing about.
2. I look for ways to connect the writing activities to my goals in life.

Motivational Self-Talk

1. I remind myself that writing is an important skill to learn.
2. My goal in class is to see how much I can learn and improve as a writer.

Emotional Control

1. I continue writing in class even when I don't feel like it.
2. When I feel frustrated about writing, I know what I need to say or do to feel better.