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Beginning Adult Literacy Learners, Portfolios, and Self-Regulated Learning

Marilyn L. Abbott & Kent K. Lee

Faculty of Education, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Abstract

The use of self-regulated learning (SRL) strategies such as planning, goal-setting, monitoring, evaluating, and reflecting on ways to improve learning typically involve print-based literacy skills. Beginning adult English as a second language literacy learners (BELLs) who have had few prior experiences with formal, school-based learning are in the process of developing the formal SRL strategies associated with effective classroom learning. The use of portfolios in the classroom has been found to contribute to the development of both literacy and SRL strategies; however, investigations of BELLs' portfolio use and SRL are scarce. To address this gap, 118 BELLs from 23 different classes were individually interviewed to investigate their experiences with and perceptions of portfolio use and assessment in their task-based language and literacy classes. Bi/multi-lingual interpreters conducted, transcribed, and translated the interviews into English. Students' responses regarding the purpose of portfolios, the processes involved in using portfolios, their attitudes towards portfolios, and the influence of portfolios on their learning were thematically analyzed for evidence of SRL. Results revealed that (a) BELLs' attitudes towards portfolios were generally positive in that portfolios helped them to organize their work for later review and allowed them to see their improvement, and (b) BELLs' emergent understanding and use of portfolios as a tool for SRL was influenced by the high levels of teacher-regulation and the summative use of portfolio results for advancement in these classes. Findings are discussed in regard to the role of portfolios in developing SRL and their practical implications for literacy instruction.

Keywords: task-based language teaching, ESL literacy, Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC), Portfolio-Based Language Assessment (PBLA), emergent readers

Introduction

Self-regulated learning (SRL) is a process in which students set learning goals and then control their cognition, behaviours, emotions, and motivation to achieve these goals (Zimmerman et al., 2017). The use of SRL strategies such as planning, monitoring, and reflecting on learning has been reported to help students attain their learning goals (Abrami et al., 2013). The development and use of these SRL strategies in the classroom, however, tends to rely heavily on print-based literacy skills. This reliance presents a challenge for beginning adult English as a second language literacy learners (BELLs) as they have emerging print literacy in their first language (L1) and English, and they also have had few prior experiences with formal school-based learning or experiences with self-regulated learning (SRL) in the classroom. BELLs, as beginning English language learners in the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, form a subpopulation of the broader Literacy Education and Second Language Learning for Adults (LESLLA) learner demographic. According to LESLLA (n.d.),

a LESLLA learner is characterized as an adult (age 15+) who is learning an additional language against the backdrop of interrupted formal schooling experience. These learners are often, though not always, immigrant or refugee-background individuals developing print literacy skills for the first time as adults, usually in a new language. (para 6)

Like other LESLLA learners for whom reading, writing, and school-based tasks might be unfamiliar (DeCapua & Marshall, 2020), BELLs have been reported to struggle with using formal SRL strategies such as utilizing print literacy strategies to set goals, to reflect on their learning, and to manage their time in task-based language classes (Abbott et al., 2021).

A potential solution for assisting BELLs in developing their formal SRL strategies is the building and use of portfolios and portfolio assessment. For example, findings from research conducted with upper elementary students showed that engagement in portfolio activities positively impacted both the students' literacy skills and their SRL strategy use (Abrami et al., 2013). In second language writing classes, portfolio assessments have also been reported to promote students' SRL (Lam, 2017). These findings, however, are from research that involved learners who had well-developed foundational literacy skills in their first language (L1). In the only one that has been conducted on the use of portfolios by literacy learners, Kurvers (2015) reported that portfolio use predicted growth in writing. However, little is known about the role of portfolios in developing BELLs' SRL. To address this gap, 118 BELLs, who spoke 27 different L1s and were enrolled in 23 different task-based language and literacy classes, were individually interviewed to investigate how SRL was reflected in their experiences and perceptions of portfolio use and assessment in their classes.

The Study Context

The number of newcomers to Canada who have literacy needs has increased significantly over the last five years (Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada, 2020). A majority of these newcomers attend English as a second language (ESL) literacy classes offered in the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program. LINC is a federally funded basic ESL program for adult immigrants who are permanent residents or Convention refugees.

The purpose of LINC is to facilitate newcomers' "social, cultural, economic and political integration into Canada" (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2010, p. 1). LINC instruction is informed by a set of competency-based language standards outlined in the Canadian Language Benchmarks¹ (CLBs; Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks [CCLB], 2012). The CLBs contain descriptions of authentic listening, speaking, reading, and writing tasks across 12 levels of language proficiency (CLB 1-12)² which are categorized into three stages: Stage I, beginner - CLB 1 to 4; Stage II, intermediate - CLB 5 to 8; Stage III, advanced - CLB 9 to 12. There is also a literacy stream from CLB Foundations to CLB 4L for those beginning ESL learners who are developing print literacy for the first time in English and those who have had few prior experiences with formal, school-based learning in their first language. Learners' literacy skills in their first language and English are assessed by certified CLB assessors prior to placement in LINC (Language Assessment, Referral and Counselling Centre, 2019).

The theoretical framework for the CLBs (CCLB, 2015) includes Bachman and Palmer's (2010) model of language ability and Skehan's (1998) definition of language tasks. As a result, LINC programming is designed to develop learners' strategic competence and their knowledge of grammar, text structure, language functions, and sociolinguistics as they learn to complete tasks that are relevant to their settlement needs (e.g., tasks related to health, housing, banking, employment, and citizenship). The prescribed teaching approach in LINC is task-based language teaching (TBLT) and task-based language assessment (TBLA). Tasks in LINC follow Skehan's (1998) definition of tasks as activities in which "meaning is primary, there is a goal which needs to be worked towards, the activity is outcome-evaluated, [and] there is a real-world relationship" (p. 268). Each term, LINC instructors administer a CLB-based learner needs assessment to identify the topics and tasks that will inform their curricula, and then be used to develop the lessons and assessments for their classes. TBLA in LINC follows a highly prescriptive portfolio-based language assessment (PBLA) protocol that is mandated by the federal government and is described in detail in the ensuing section.

Literature Review

TBLT/A and PBLA in LINC Literacy Classes

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) is "characterized by activities that engage language learners in meaningful, goal-oriented communication to solve problems, complete projects, and reach decisions" (Pica, 2008, p. 71). Results from TBLA can be used to inform both teaching and learning, and enable predictions about the learners' abilities to use language in the real world (Norris, 2016). Portfolios are one of several assessment tools that teachers can use to gather information on learner progress in the TBLT classroom (Nunan, 2004).

As of 2019, PBLA became the mandated assessment protocol in all LINC programs. The fundamental features of the protocol are presented in Figure 1. After administering the learner needs assessment, instructors in LINC literacy classes have their students set language learning

¹ The Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLBs: CCLB 2012) are available at <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/ircc/migration/ircc/english/pdf/pub/language-benchmarks.pdf>

² The participants in this study were assessed at CLB 1–4. These levels of English language proficiency correspond to A1-A2 in the *Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)* (North & Piccardo, 2018) and novice-low to intermediate-mid in the *American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Proficiency Guidelines* (ACTFL, n.d.).

goals and then administer a minimum of 16 task-based assessments during the 14 week term, four in each of the skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing (CCLB, 2019). All LINC students are given a binder that serves as their portfolio to compile their needs assessment, learning goals, assessment tasks, instructor- and peer-feedback, and self-assessments and reflections. The information in the portfolio is supposed to assist students in developing strategies for improvement. LINC instructors are expected to teach their students about this process, and design lessons with activities and tasks that address the students' learning and settlement needs. At the end of term, the instructors use BELLS' PBLA results to assign students a benchmark level for each of the four skills and fill out a standardized progress report. Instructors also conduct a learner progress conference with each student to discuss the report and whether the student has sufficient evidence in the binder to be promoted to the next level. According to the CCLB (2019), students are considered to have achieved the next benchmark once they have demonstrated the ability to meet at least 70% of the task criteria on a minimum of 3 assessment tasks in each of the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). In effect, PBLA results are high stakes in that they affect students' level promotion in LINC, which in turn determine their eligibility for citizenship application.

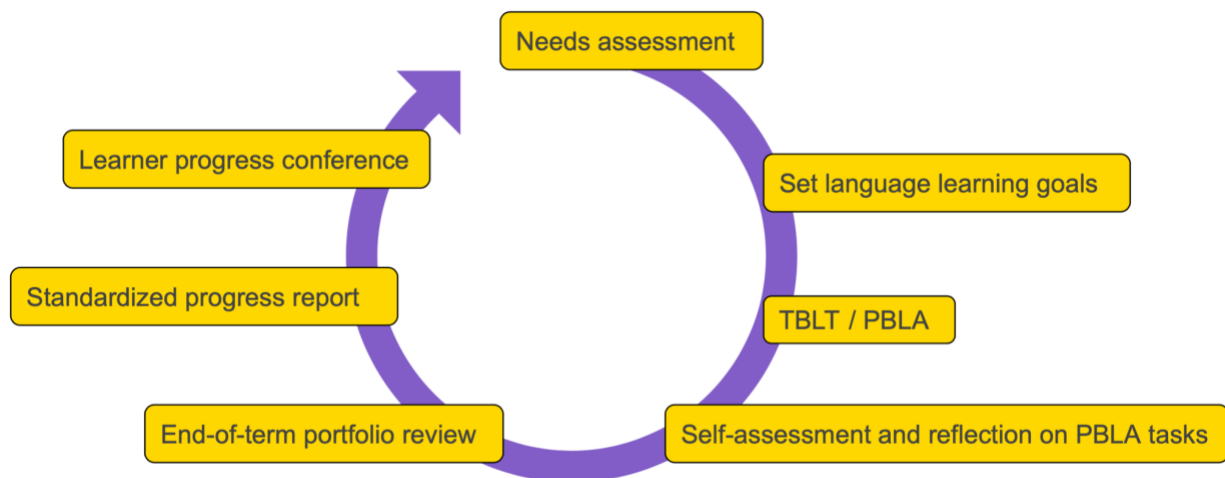


Figure 1: *Fundamental features of Portfolio-Based Language Assessment (PBLA) in LINC*

Research suggests that the reflective activities involved in the use of portfolios fosters the development of self-regulated learning (Abrami et al., 2013; Lam, 2017).

Self-Regulated Learning

Self-regulation refers to an individual's capacity to control their cognition, behaviour, emotions, and motivation when performing tasks (Zimmerman, 2000). SRL involves "the processes whereby learners personally activate and sustain cognitions, affects, and behaviors that are systematically oriented toward the attainment of personal goals" (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011, p. 1). These processes occur in three cyclical phases: the first is forethought (which involves planning for task performance), the second phase is the performance (which involves monitoring and controlling one's performance), and the third phase is self-reflection (which involves evaluating one's performance) (Zimmerman, 2013). Research in SRL has demonstrated

that learners who proactively engage in the SRL cycle “not only attain mastery more quickly, but also are more motivated to sustain their efforts to learn” (Zimmerman, 2013, p. 135).

Formal SRL strategies, such as setting realistic learning goals, managing time and attention during task completion, keeping records of learning, using positive self-talk, and reflecting on learning, help students to monitor and control their thoughts, behaviours, and emotions when learning in classroom environments (Oxford, 2017; Zimmerman et al., 2017). Researchers (Chen et al., 2020; Seker, 2016; Teng & Zhang, 2016) have argued that SRL plays an important role in language learning as SRL strategy use has been found to predict English language learning achievement. Researchers (e.g., Guo et al., 2018; Pekrun et al., 2011) have also demonstrated that students’ emotions related to the classroom, learning, and testing influence their SRL strategy use. For example, Pekrun et al. (2011) found positive relationships between positive emotions (e.g., enjoyment) and SRL strategy use, and Guo et al. (2018) reported negative relationships between negative emotions (e.g., anxiety) and SRL strategy use. These findings suggest that BELLS’ emotions elicited by ESL classroom activities will likely affect their emergent formal SRL strategy use, which in turn has the potential to positively impact their English language learning. Nevertheless, these relationships remain to be investigated in the context of LINC with BELLS, TBLT, and PBLA.

Zimmerman (2000) attributed students’ success in self-regulation to having the self-regulated learning cycle taught and modeled in their formative years in the home, school, and community. In school, the quality of students’ SRL processes can be improved through the mediation and scaffolding by more capable others including teachers and peers (Zimmerman, 2013). For example, a teacher can show students how to divide a learning task into smaller, manageable steps and then demonstrate while thinking aloud how to complete the steps. Then while students attempt the task, the teacher provides any necessary guidance to help the students actively select and deploy appropriate strategies, monitor their effectiveness, and reflect on their task performance. This other-regulation by the teacher supports the development of self-regulation throughout the three phases of SRL that occur before, during and after task performance. The level of support provided by the teacher is dependent on students’ ability to complete a particular task independently. As the students achieve the task outcomes/learning goals and develop the capacity to self-regulate, the teacher gradually removes the scaffolding.

Self-Regulated Learning and Portfolios

One way teachers may be able to foster students’ SRL is through the use of portfolios in their classrooms. Proponents of portfolios as an assessment tool have argued for their potential to foster students’ motivation (Gencel, 2017), goal setting and reflection (Fox, 2017), and to engage students as active participants in the learning process (Baas et al., 2020), all of which are relevant to SRL. Studies of portfolio assessment in L2 writing classrooms have also shown that portfolio assessment fosters the development of effective compositional strategies for self-reflection and promotes self-regulated learning (Lam, 2017). Studies of portfolio building by literacy learners, however, are rare. In one study of Dutch literacy learners, Kurvers (2015) found a correlation between portfolio use and growth in writing, but the study did not examine aspects of SRL. In Abrami et al.’s (2013) experimental study in which upper elementary L1 speakers of English were required to use portfolios which incorporated SRL strategies including goal-setting, planning, self-evaluation, and reflecting on written feedback, portfolio use was reported to stimulate the development of the students’ English literacy skills and their SRL. It is important to note, however, that the formal SRL strategies that the students used in Abrami et al.’s study

required print-based literacy skills. Because SRL strategies tend to be print-based and BELLS are in the process of developing print literacy for the first time in any language, portfolio use may not be as effective in developing BELLS' SRL strategies. Nevertheless, little is known about the role of PBLA in fostering BELLS' SRL as only a limited number of studies have been conducted in the context of LINC literacy classes.

Research on PBLA

Only a few studies have examined LINC literacy instructors' (Abbott et al., 2021; Abdulhamid & Fox, 2020; Fox & Fraser, 2012; Karasova, 2019; Ripley, 2018) and literacy learners' experiences of PBLA (Abbott et al., 2021). A common theme reported in all five of these studies was that LINC instructors questioned the appropriateness of PBLA for literacy learners mainly due to the exorbitant amount of time required to implement the PBLA protocol with these unique learners; however, SRL was not the focus of any of these studies. Nonetheless, Abdulhamid and Fox (2020) suggested that students need to understand the purpose of portfolios in promoting learning, which may be interpreted as an important form of scaffolding for BELLS. In Abbott et al.'s (2021) study of PBLA's alignment with learning-oriented assessment, we found that BELLS experienced challenges completing print-based inventories or checklists that required critical self-reflection, which is one aspect of SRL. Research that extends our understanding of how portfolio building and assessment promotes the development of all aspects of BELLS' formal SRL in the LINC classroom is needed to inform effective instructional practices for BELLS. However, no research has been conducted to date that has specifically focused on BELLS' perceptions of PBLA and its potential for developing their SRL. To address this gap, we addressed the following research question: What evidence of SRL is present in BELLS' attitudes towards PBLA, and their perceptions of the purpose, processes, attitudes, and influence of their PBLA portfolios on their learning?

Method

Participants

BELLS ($n = 118$) enrolled in Foundations to CLB 4L LINC classes from five programs in 23 different classes participated in the individual interviews conducted in this study. The majority (80%) identified as women and the other 20% identified as men. Their average age was 38 years ($SD = 11$, Range = 17–71 years). All had few prior experiences with formal, school-based learning in their first language: 23% had not had the opportunity to attend school and 77% reported 6 years or less of school-based learning in any language. At the time of the study, the amount of ESL education that they had received varied widely; the average was 12 months ($SD = 11$). The most common L1s spoken by the participants included Arabic (29%), Somali (20%), Tigrinya (11%), Oromo (7%), and Swahili (6%). In addition, 3% or less of the participants reported each of the following languages as their L1: Albanian, Amharic, Creole, French, Karen, Kinyamulenge, Kisi, Kurdish, Dari, Dzonkha, Mandarin, Mina, Nuer, Pashto, Persian, Pular, Punjabi, Spanish, Thai, Turkish, Uyghur, and Vietnamese. The distribution of participants' language proficiency across the beginning levels of the CLBs was as follows: Foundations (4%), CLB 1L (24%), CLB 2L (33%), CLB 3L (15%), CLB 4L (24%).²

Data Collection

After receiving university and institutional ethics approvals, we contacted five LINC program administrators to gain their permission to conduct research in their programs and to request that they email our study information letter and consent to their literacy instructors. Twenty-three LINC literacy instructors responded to our email and granted us permission to attend their classes so we could invite their students to participate in the study. With the assistance of bilingual and multilingual interpreters, we explained the purpose of the study and received informed consent from 118 BELLS to participate in the individual semi-structured interviews about their perceptions of and experiences with PBLA. The interpreters and members of our research team, who were also multilingual, conducted the student interviews in the BELLS' L1. The interviews, which lasted from 20 to 30 minutes, were recorded, translated into English, and transcribed by the interpreters and members of our research team.

Analysis

We thematically analyzed the interview transcripts by following the procedures outlined in Braun and Clarke (2012). To familiarize ourselves with the data, we independently read the transcripts in their entirety. Then we performed concept coding (Saldaña, 2016) on the BELLS' responses to the questions asked during the interviews about their perceptions of the purpose of the PBLA portfolio, the processes involved in using PBLA, their attitudes towards PBLA, and the influence of their PBLA portfolios on their learning. Concept codes were assigned to text segments that represent broader underlying ideas or processes (e.g., the sentence *I look at my previous tests and compare my current results* contains two observable actions that collectively represent the overall concept of *tracking one's performance*). Next, we met to reach a consensus on our coding; the few disagreements we had were resolved through discussion. Finally, we reviewed the coded segments to identify, refine, and name the themes and subthemes in the coded data.

Findings and Discussion

Our thematic analysis revealed two main themes and five subthemes (see Figure 2). The two main themes were that (a) BELLS' attitudes towards aspects of the PBLA protocol were generally positive in that PBLA helped them to organize their work for later review and allowed them to see their improvement, and (b) BELLS' emergent understanding and use of portfolios as a tool for SRL was influenced by the high levels of teacher-regulation and the summative use of portfolio results for advancement in these classes. Findings related to each of these themes and their associated subthemes are presented in the ensuing subsections and discussed in relation to the literature and our research question.

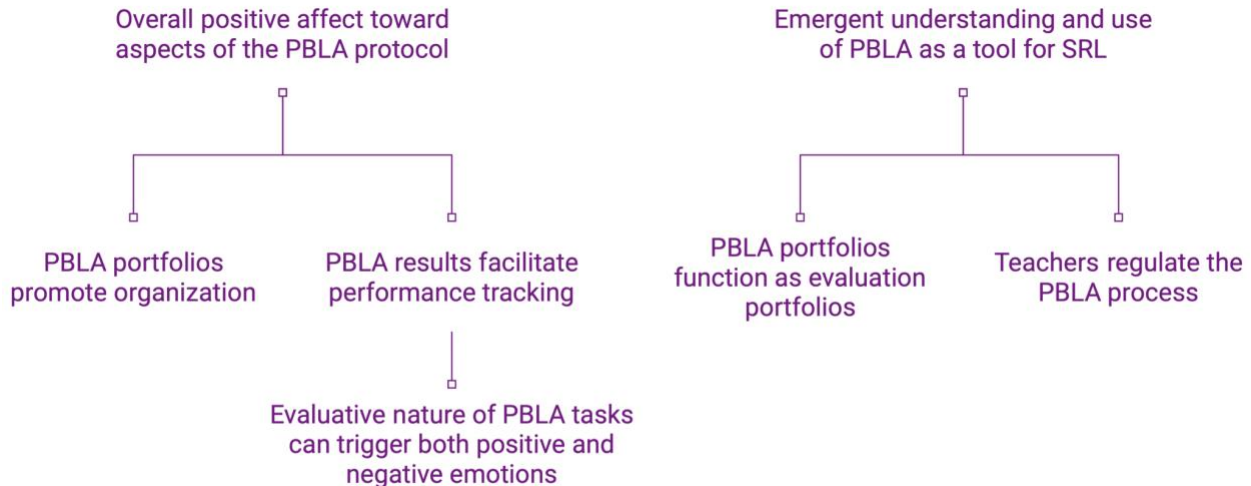


Figure 2: Themes and subthemes in the BELLS' interview data about their PBLA perceptions and experiences

Overall Positive Affect Toward Aspects of the PBLA Protocol: Organization & Performance Tracking

A majority (93%) of the BELLS in our study indicated that they liked aspects of the PBLA protocol. The following representative quotes demonstrate BELLS' positive attitudes toward the protocols' capacity to promote their organization and performance tracking:

- "I like PBLA because it saves and organizes my stuff. I can easily find my tests whenever I need them" (P15).
- "I like PBLA because my binder helps me not to lose my test papers" (P102).
- "It's good to see your results" (P36).
- "I can see if I am improving or not" (P55).
- "I like PBLA because I can easily go back to my previous work" (P59).

Our findings imply that BELLS' positive emotions toward aspects of the PBLA protocol may be attributed to their recognition of the value of tracking their performance and monitoring their progress when learning English, and that portfolios are a useful tool for tracking and monitoring their learning. Because research suggests that positive emotions predict SRL (Pekrun et al., 2011), if BELLS hold positive attitudes towards PBLA, they may be more likely to use SRL strategies, such as monitoring their task performance and progress.

The Evaluative Nature of the PBLA Tasks Can Trigger Both Positive and Negative Emotions

Although BELLS regarded aspects of the PBLA protocol positively, the evaluative nature of the PBLA tasks elicited both positive and negative emotions. BELLS were proud of their PBLA task results when they achieved level-appropriate CLB standards, and these achievements, in turn, increased their confidence in their ability and motivation to learn English. These findings are evident in the following quotes:

- “Good marks give me confidence, but bad marks indicate that I have to work harder to improve my English. Sometimes when the tasks are hard I feel worried and stressed that I am not doing good with learning English. But when I understand a task and then complete it, I feel so proud of myself and I feel motivated to do even harder tasks” (P58).
- “How I feel about my learning depends on the results because when I make mistakes, I feel frustrated, but when I get good results, I feel happy” (P17).
- “I get nervous because I want high marks” (P31).
- “The tests make me a little bit anxious” (P93).
- “I’m worried sometimes when my classmates can do it but I cannot. I try my best though” (P86).

Our findings show that the evaluative nature of the PBLA tasks triggered BELLS’ negative emotions including worry, stress, frustration, nervousness, and anxiety. Abbott et al. (2021) also reported similar findings as LINC literacy instructors indicated that PBLA tasks triggered debilitating emotions in some BELLS and these emotions impeded BELLS’ task engagement and performance. Findings from the current study, however, add to our understanding of BELLS’ negative emotions in that some BELLS appear to have used SRL strategies to manage their negative emotions. For example, despite being worried about their task performance, some BELLS were clearly goal-oriented and they did their best to achieve their goals through the use of positive self-talk and self-reflection. It is also possible that a bit of worry facilitated their task performance, as Brady et al. (2018) found that when students can refocus their worry (i.e., self-regulate their emotions), their anxiety will not necessarily be detrimental to their performance. Other BELLS, nevertheless, struggled to regulate their emotions in relation to the PBLA tasks:

- “I feel disturbed, worrying about how I did. Did I do well? Sometimes I feel I did well before the teacher tells me that I didn’t” (P12).

It may be the case that despite the instructors’ best attempts to communicate the task criteria, the BELLS such as P122 did not understand the task criteria due to their emergent literacy and beginning levels of English proficiency. It is difficult to use formal SRL strategies when using task rubrics to plan for and reflect on one’s performance when the rubrics are presented in English only and the learners are in the process of developing strategies for using other supports such as technology to translate the rubrics into their L1s. As Abdulhamid and Fox (2020) emphasized, for portfolios to be effective in promoting learning, the language used in the portfolios and assessments needs to be responsive to the students’ levels of language proficiency and students need to understand “what they are doing” (p. 185).

Emergent Understanding and Use of PBLA as a Tool for SRL: PBLA Portfolios Function as Evaluation Portfolios

BELLS’ emergent understanding of PBLA as a SRL tool was largely influenced by the high-stakes, evaluative nature of PBLA.

- “It [the PBLA binder] is used to file and store my exam results to show as proof to the government that this is what I am doing. Every time I have a test, the

teacher has us put it there for the government. The results will let me go to the next level” (P82).

Many BELLS perceived that their portfolios belonged to the government and were being used as a measure of accountability. This perception hindered both the BELLS’ sense of ownership of their portfolios and their understanding of the potential uses of PBLA as a tool for SRL in that the BELLS primarily focused on the holistic criteria, which indicated whether their task performance met the CLB level:

- “I look for the *yes* or the big chicken [on a developmental pictorial scale of egg-chick-chicken] that shows I passed the task” (P90).

This quote indicates an understanding of the task rubric which could then be used to inform self-reflection on learning; however, a focus on passing the task may draw the learners’ attention away from the additional information contained in the rubric (e.g., written descriptions of the analytic criteria such as *writes information in the correct spaces, prints legibly, follows conventions for writing telephone numbers*) that could be used to inform future SRL. During our interviews, a few BELLS asked us for assistance in interpreting some of their results in their portfolios because they did not understand the meaning and developmental nature of the pictures used in the holistic rating scales or the meaning of the analytic criteria. This may be attributed to their emergent literacy. While other researchers (e.g., Abdulhamid & Fox, 2020; Ripley, 2018) have reported an over-emphasis on evaluation in PBLA, they did not explore PBLA’s potential to foster BELLS’ SRL. Our findings imply that the evaluative function of portfolios in LINC literacy classes hinders this potential.

Emergent Understanding and Use of PBLA as a Tool for SRL: Teacher-Regulation

The role of PBLA as an evaluative accountability tool may explain why all of the BELLS in our study described PBLA as a highly teacher-regulated process. The following quotes are representative of their descriptions of the portfolio building process across all 23 LINC classrooms.

- “The teacher returns my test and tells me to put it in the binder” (P92).
- “My teacher tells me to use the binder, that's why I use it. She tells me which section to put the test in” (P58).
- “The teacher directed me on how to arrange the binder” (P93).
- “The teacher tells us what and where to put the tests into the binder” (P16).

Teacher-regulation is important given that formal SRL develops through the mediation/scaffolding of more capable others (Zimmerman, 2013). However, due to the highly prescriptive, evaluative nature of PBLA, LINC literacy instructors have to over-regulate the portfolio building process to ensure that all of the required portfolio components outlined in Figure 1 are documented and included in the students’ binders. When asked who chooses what goes into the binders, all 118 participants responded with “the teacher.” Therefore, students have very little control over the PBLA process. This finding that PBLA is highly teacher controlled due to government requirements is echoed in previous studies of PBLA (Abbott et al., 2021; Abdulhamid & Fox, 2020). Our findings suggest that BELLS’ understanding of the purpose and

potential of PBLA to promote all aspects of formal SRL in the classroom is emerging in that their binders helped them to organize their learning, but the full potential of PBLA as a tool for planning, monitoring, evaluating, and reflecting on their learning remains to be reached. Abdulhamid and Fox (2020) argued that students need to recognize the purpose of portfolios before portfolios can achieve their potential as a tool for supporting learning. Our results add to this argument in that this recognition is vital for the development of BELLS' formal SRL.

The high degree of teacher-regulation required in the PBLA protocol has the potential to foster aspects of BELLS' formal SRL including goal setting and reflection. Nonetheless, the goals that were mentioned in the interviews were very broad:

- “I want to learn English to talk to the doctor and my son's teachers in school” (P78).
- “My goal is citizenship. I need CLB 4 [to apply]. It's reading that's hard” (P110).
- “My goal is to learn English so I can find a part time job” (P96).

This finding may be a result of the PBLA goal setting tools that led BELLS to understand goal setting in broad terms as opposed to specific learning targets. Example tools include a checklist of goals such as *to participate in the community* or *to read or listen to the news*. Goals that refer to specific performance standards have been reported to have greater potential for enhancing aspects of self-regulation, including planning and self-reflection, than generic goals, such as *try harder* or *do better work* (Latham & Locke, 1991) or in the case of BELLS *to read English*.

As described previously, the PBLA protocol requires that instructors have their students self-assess and reflect on their task performance (see Figure 1); nonetheless, those PBLA reflection activities that have the potential to promote SRL were not always perceived by the BELLS as self-reflection activities, rather the purpose of these activities was construed as an opportunity to provide constructive feedback that their instructors could use to improve the PBLA tasks.

- “After every exam [PBLA task], the teacher gives us an evaluation form that asks if the test was too easy, just right, or too difficult. We then circle our choice. I think this is so she can improve the exam” (P126).

Greene (2020) suggested that how students use portfolios as a self-assessment and SRL tool is influenced by their (a) prior exposure including how their teachers mediate the development of students' SRL through portfolio building, and (b) the language involved in portfolio use and the SRL activities/tools. The following quote shows that other-regulation by the instructors and language were factors that impacted BELLS' SRL in our study; however, the development of SRL through portfolio building is much more complicated for BELLS than for students with well-developed L1 literacy skills due to BELLS' emergent literacy.

- “I understand the task criteria because the teacher explained them but I keep forgetting. It is my main problem. I keep forgetting. I do not understand the numbers at the bottom of the tests. I just put the test in the binder. I don't understand the ‘about me’ section [which includes learning goals, a pictorial needs assessment, and learning reflections]” (P78).

To sum up our findings in this section, teacher-regulation, which we found to promote SRL in PBLA, involves ensuring that BELLS set language learning goals, complete task reflection activities, and organize their portfolios. While goal setting, reflecting on learning, and organizing one's work are useful SRL strategies (Oxford, 2017; Zimmerman, 2013), our results imply that BELLS' understanding and use of the information in the portfolios to maximize their SRL would benefit from additional types of teacher-regulation (scaffolding) and learning supports. Some ideas for scaffolding support are included in the ensuing section.

Practical Implications for Portfolio Use with BELLS and Implications for Future Research

The creation of learning conditions and supports that foster formal SRL in BELLS is needed to assist instructors who are required to implement evaluation portfolios in their classes. Programs that require the use of evaluation portfolios for literacy learners must develop materials to ensure that the learning potential of portfolios is maximized. Given our findings, the development of materials and supports to assist instructors with the following practices would be beneficial.

- Continue promoting a positive learning environment that cultivates positive emotions in conjunction with teaching and encouraging BELLS to develop and effectively use formal SRL strategies when learning with portfolios (see SRL strategies in Oxford, 2017).
- Teach coping strategies such as positive self-talk to help BELLS deal with negative emotions elicited by the evaluative aspects of portfolios.
- Use L1 oral language support to ensure BELLS understand the purpose of portfolios and the associated activities.
- In addition to helping BELLS identify their broad language learning goals, help them to set realistic goals that reflect specific performance standards (e.g., accurately write basic personal information in the appropriate sections of a job application form rather than learn English to get a job).
- Use L1 oral language support to help BELLS learn how to use formal SRL strategies to regulate the (meta)cognitive, behavioural, motivational, and emotional aspects of learning in formal classroom environments (e.g., create L1 demonstration videos).
- Use technology to orally translate the scoring rubrics into the BELLS' L1s.
- When using pictures in rubrics that are intended to represent growth in learning (e.g., seed, sapling, tree), ensure that BELLS actually understand the developmental nature of the pictures. L1 support is likely needed to communicate this as well.
- Use L1 oral language support to model how to use the task assessment criteria in the rubrics to self-assess task performance, especially the analytic criteria.

The effectiveness of these materials and supports in promoting BELLS' SRL are avenues for future research. To increase our understanding of the emergent nature of SRL in BELLS and the role of portfolios in fostering BELLS' SRL, additional studies are also needed in other

literacy program contexts which use different types of portfolio protocols (e.g., showcase or working portfolios).

Conclusion

In our study, BELLS' reactions to the process of building their portfolios were generally positive, but their understanding and use of portfolios as a tool for SRL was emergent. Although portfolio building was recognized as developing and supporting BELLS' goal setting, reflection and organizational skills, an explicit induction and instructional process for BELLS in their L1 that highlights the purpose of portfolios and their usefulness as a tool for developing SRL strategies, not just as an assessment tool, may be helpful in allaying BELLS' negative affect associated with task-based assessment and their ability to control their cognition, behaviours, emotions, and to some extent their environment and ultimately support their language learning.

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