The Benefits of Setting Individual Learner Goals in an English Foreign Language Writing Class

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to test whether there is a benefit, in terms of improvement in writing, from students creating their own individual learner goals to work towards during a one semester writing course. The traditional pedagogical approach is to assign learning goals and teaching objectives to a whole class based upon their holistic needs. However, research has shown there is a lot of individual variation in human learning (Guerriero, 2017). Therefore, an approach catering to each learner's individual needs may be better than a uniform approach to learning. In addition, giving student's autonomy to drive the curriculum in the direction they feel most matches their needs can increase their motivation as supported by Self Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000), the study of task (mastery and learning) goals and performance (ego) goals by Ames and Archer (1988) and goal setting theory (Locke & Latham, 2002). This study asked students to set their own short-term and long-term learning goals at the beginning of a one semester writing course and then measured improvements made in their writing between the beginning and end of the course, it also asked them their opinions of goal setting in relation to their learning.

Keywords: *Individual learner goals, Goal setting*

Introduction

Dörnyei (2001) claimed that disagreement between teacher and student goals can cause a sense of disconnection between the students and the goals of the class decided by the teacher and can make the students feel less active in their own learning process (p. 59). Despite widespread advocacy for the benefits of learner autonomy, self-regulatory processes and the acceptance of individual differences in learning, current approaches to course design and implementation often neglect to involve learners in setting their own personal goals. Pedagogues frequently decide learning goals and seldom incentivize students to attune these goals to their individual needs and interests (Marzano et al., 2001). Course goals are usually set

by the teacher, the curriculum designer or the institution, with the same goals set universally for all students who will take the course. The goals are then corresponded with teaching objectives to facilitate their successful achievement and the subsequent desired student learning outcomes. This allows the teacher and the students to know what the focus of the lessons will be and what the students should accomplish. These curricular goals and objectives are an essential element of lesson planning.

However, the process of taking part in an individual learner goal setting process has been shown to have a multitude of benefits for learners. Goal setting is proven to be strongly related to language learning achievement (Moeller et al., 2012) and assists students by providing them with study skills valuable in the future (Edwards, 2013). Goal setting, by providing an "authentic and autonomous" experience, has a positive effect on raising students' awareness and motivation (Klimas, 2010, 2017). Providing students with more autonomy to set their own benchmarks and guide their learning to match their own needs fosters feelings of ownership and increases motivation through the process of Self-Determination Theory (Deci et al., 2017). Assessment for learning (AFL) is a pedagogical approach rapidly growing in popularity. It aims to provide feedback especially designed to better students' achievement by engaging them to think about their current level, their improvement goals and how to achieve them (Cambridge Assessment International Education, 2022). This concept of evaluating one's own needs as a language learner, setting goals based on them and specifically working towards those goals in a focused way, led to the creation of this study.

This paper examines the efficacy of a guided process of individual learner goal setting by measuring improvements in essay writing performance in a university EFL reading and writing course. The goal setting process was guided because learners were asked to look at feedback given on a pre-test writing assignment before deciding their goals. Improvements were measured between the pre-test and post-test assessments. Students also reflected on whether they felt they had achieved these goals at the end of the course. The study sought to discover whether students who set their own individual goals would improve their English writing skills more than students who did not by the end of the 14-week course. In addition, it sought to determine how receptive students are to the goal setting process and how useful they perceived it to be. The research questions are as follows:

1. Does individual learner goal setting guided by feedback facilitate improvements in writing performance over a one semester writing course?
2. Do learners perceive the process of setting their own goals to be beneficial? If so, in what way?

Literature Review

Goal setting and self-monitoring as a practice emerged in the late 1970s from

metacognitive research, such as the work of Flavell (1978), and social cognitive views on students' individual differences presented by authors like Bandura (1977). They believed the differences to be a result of a lack of self-awareness and self-regulation (Schunk, 1989; Zimmerman, 1989, 2002). Metacognition is the consciousness and understanding of one's own thought processes. Metacognitive researchers at this time felt that students' difficulties stemmed from an inadequate metacognitive understanding of their personal shortcomings and an ineptitude to expiate them. Social cognitive research focused on social effects on the generation of children's self-regulation, including the effects of goal setting and self-monitoring (Zimmerman, 2002).

Zimmerman (2002) states that goal setting increases the chance of academic success by making learners aware of their strengths and weaknesses, assisting them to develop strategies to overcome them and monitor their own success while thinking auspiciously of future self-improvement, which in turn increases motivation. This self-regulatory behavior, of which metacognition is a vital element, leads to successful language learning (Bursali & Öz, 2018).

Goal theory posits two directions students can take to goal setting. The first is intrinsically orientated towards learning and self-improvement. It can be referred to as task-focused or mastery goals. The second is more extrinsically oriented towards receiving external rewards such as a higher grade or a better test score than one's classmates. It can be referred to as ability focused, ego-involving or performance goals (Elliott & Dweck, 1988). From here on I will refer to the two as mastery goals and performance goals.

Setting mastery goals has been found to have a strong relation to metacognition and high self-efficacy (Bursali & Öz, 2018). Mastery goals can be further divided into two sub-categories. The first category, mastery approach goals, are solely related to furthering one's own ability as a means of self-improvement, for example, being able to watch a foreign film without subtitles. The second category, mastery-avoidance goals involve improving one's capability to avoid a negative consequence, such as misunderstanding the plot of a foreign film. Ames and Archer (1988) concluded that a priority on mastery goals led to the use of more productive strategies, willingness to attempt challenging tasks, a positive learning attitude and the credence that effort leads to success.

Performance goals have a strong connection to self-esteem. This can be explained by the seeking of praise as a positive reinforcement and the avoidance of negative reinforcement such as shame, fear and anxiety because of failure. Ames and Archer (1988) found that students who set performance goals would view their failure as the result of deficient ability, this would feed a tendency to see future tasks as too difficult, ultimately having a detrimental effect on motivation. Assessment setting for performance goals must be responsibly managed by the teacher so as not to become damaging to the learner (Bursali & Öz, 2018). Roebken (2007) claims that setting both mastery and performance goals assist academic achievement.

The way goals are set by learners is fundamental to how beneficial the process will be. Locke and Latham (1990), in their goal setting theory, state that there are three crucial

points to goal setting: specificity of what the student aims to achieve and how they define it, how difficult the goal is perceived to be by the student and to what degree the student can commit to achieving the goal. Goals should be set in a manner that is clear, matches the learner's capability but also poses enough of a challenge to be motivating (Williams et al., 2015). Clear understanding of a goal is linked to a better attitude towards an undertaking and a higher-level of performance. If a goal seems unattainable a learner may concede defeat before its achievement (Klimas, 2017). Another facet to consider is goal proximity in relation to time frame for success, meaning whether the goal is to be achieved short term or long term. Klimas (2010) notes that learners frequently neglect to perceive how important short-term goals are as markers of success along their language learning journey. Doran (1981) created a memorable acronym to summarize the points to remember when setting a goal SMART: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timebound. The characteristics of the goals students set can influence their cognition, emotions, and behavior across different contexts, such as during performance-based assessments and tests (Cheng, 2023).

Learners may be inexperienced with the process of goal setting and lacking the skills necessary. Klimas (2017) said that at the beginning of her study when setting goals, the students (upper-level high school students in Poland) lacked "certain cognitive and metacognitive skills" and "they needed to reflect on their learning more deeply." Boekarts (2002, as cited in Moeller et al., 2012) suggests that the best approach is for a student to set a learning goal, which is then agreed upon with the teacher. The successful deployment of goal setting requires pedagogues to recognize the steps that reinforce the process and how to practically employ them. When asking students to take part in the process of goal setting an explicit explanation of the causal relationship between effort and achievement is required (Moeller et al., 2012). Finally, by understanding their students' goal orientation, teachers can direct their teaching efforts effectively, fostering a supportive and positive learning environment (Cheng, 2023).

Methodology

Research Participants and Place of Implementation

The research participants for this study were six first year, Reading and Writing (RW) classes at Rikkyo University, a prestigious, private university in Tokyo. There were a total of 94 participants. Three experimental groups with a total of 45 participants who received the goal setting treatment and three control groups with a total of 49 participants who did not receive the goal setting treatment. In the 2021 academic year autumn semester, two classes with a total of 30 students took part in the study: 15 in each class. They had a combined TOEIC listening and reading score of 480–679 placing them at Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) level A2–B1. They will be referred to as group 1.

The place of implementation was the online Reading and Writing classes attended by these students, once a week over the 14-week autumn semester and taught by the researcher

and lead author of this paper. One class was the experimental group receiving the treatment and the other was the control group.

The study was repeated with another two RW classes in the spring semester of 2023 and again with another two more RW classes in the autumn semester of 2023–2024. Again, each time one class was the control group and one class was the experimental group. The RW classes were conducted face to face in the classroom from the second iteration of the study because COVID-19 restrictions had been lifted. The four classes in the 2023 academic year were of a lower level. They had combined TOEIC scores of 280–479 placing them at CEFR level A2. In the spring semester there were 33 participants. 17 in the control group class and 16 in the experimental group class. They will be referred to as group 2. In the autumn semester there were 31 participants, 17 in the control group class and 14 in the experimental group class. They will be referred to as group 3. Classes in the spring semester (group 2) were starting the course and would have had no previous formal English reading and writing instruction at university level. However, classes in the autumn semester (group 1 and group 3) would have already had one semester of instruction in the basics of forming a paragraph and writing an essay with an introduction and conclusion and would have submitted at least one essay assignment.

Method

The students in the test group were asked at the beginning of the course to look at the syllabus and the set course goals and objectives of the course. They were asked to think about and state their own individual short-term goals (to be achieved by the end of the course) and long-term goals (to be achieved at some point in their long-term future) for their general English learning and then specifically for their writing in English. These were written in a Google Form, which they could go back to at any time and edit, should their goals change or if they wished to add new goals. Both classes (test and control) were then given a short writing assignment that was assessed and commented on by the English writing instructor. The writing assignment was to write a 5-paragraph essay. The essay should answer the following question: *If you could be any animal, which animal would you be and why?* The assessment gave a score based on essay format: introduction (with hook and thesis): 10 points, main body (topic sentences and support): 10 points, a conclusion (paraphrasing the thesis with a kicker): 10 points. It also graded their use of English (grammar and vocabulary): 10 points and content and effort (use of the time): 10 points.

In the second lesson, the assignment was returned to the students with scores and feedback from the instructor and the students in the test class were allowed to add to or change their individual learning goals. They were told they should consider the feedback on the essay and use these goals to identify elements of their English and their writing skills to try to improve by the end of the semester.

In the 13th week of the semester the students in both classes were given the same writing assignment, which was again assessed by the English writing instructor and returned with assessment and comments in the 14th week. The students in the test class were asked in a short

questionnaire about how much they felt they had achieved their learning goals and how they felt the process affected their learning. Any improvements in the writing between the pre-tests and post-tests of both test and control groups were measured, compared and analyzed along with the results of the questionnaires of the test group. The essays were assessed a second time by another English language university lecturer from an outside institution. They were given the same rubric and briefed on how to assess them using the same criteria. The mean scores of both assessors for the pre-tests and post-tests of both the control group and test group were analyzed for improvements and an ANOVA with post-hoc t-tests were performed to measure for statistical significance.

Results

A two-way mixed factorial ANOVA was conducted to determine whether there were any significant differences between the independent variables 'group' and 'time' and the dependent variable 'essay scores'. The 'group' variable was a between-subjects factor comparing mean essay scores between the control group and the experimental group. Results showed no significant effect: $F(1,92) = 1.07$, $p = 0.304$ suggesting that the experimental group did not do significantly better than the control group. The 'time' variable was a within-subjects factor with the two levels being pre-test and post-test. Results showed a significant main effect of time: $F(1,92) = 50.19$, $p < 0.001$ which suggests that both controls and the experimental group significantly improved from pre-test to post-test. There was no significant interaction between group and time: $F(1,92) = 0.77$, $p = 0.384$ showing that changes from pre-test scores to post-test scores were not significantly different between the control group and the experimental group.

Post-hoc t-tests were then conducted to look more closely at the relationships between the variables and to examine any differences between the individual groups that comprised the overall control group and the overall experimental group.

Table 1

Results of t-tests Comparing Pre-Test Essay Scores and Post-Test Essay Scores for All Groups

	Pre-test		Post-test		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Group 1 control	56.4	11.82	67.93	7.77	-3.11	.007
Group 2 control	57.88	6.01	66.82	11.04	-2.97	.009
Group 3 control	57.74	8.09	63.52	13.31	-1.90	.07
Combined control (1+2+3)	57.38	8.66	66.02	11.12	-4.64	< .001
Group 1 experimental	56.26	7.01	73.26	15.81	-4.10	< .001
Group 2 experimental	48	3.91	58.68	10.45	-3.82	< .001
Group 3 experimental	59.57	9.38	64.57	13.11	-1.15	.25
Combined experimental (1+2+3)	54.35	8.45	65.37	14.31	-5.26	< .001

Table 1 shows how both the combined control group (i.e., all the participants from the three individual control groups) and the combined experimental group improved significantly over time (p < 0.001) in both cases. Group 1 (p = 0.007) and group 2 (p = 0.009) of the overall control group showed significant improvements however group 3 did not show any statistically significant improvement (p = 0.07).

This same trend can be seen among the experimental group participants. Group 1 (p < 0.001) and group 2 (p < 0.001) showed significant improvements but group 3, while showing a slight increase in test scores, did not show any significant improvements (p = 0.25).

Table 2

Results of t-tests Comparing Control Group vs. Experimental Group Improvements on Essay Scores

	Control		Experimental		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Group 1	10.73	14.42	17.06	15.81	-1.14	.26
Group 2	8.41	11.89	10.56	10.43	-0.55	.58
Group 3	5.82	12.40	6.14	12.78	-0.07	.94
Combined (1+2+3)	8.22	12.77	11.35	13.60	-1.15	.25

Table 2 shows that there were no significant differences in terms of improvement between the control group and the experimental group (p = 0.25). We can see that the control group improved by an average of 8.22 points and the experimental group by 11.35 and while this shows that those in the experimental group scored on average higher than those in the control group, it did not reach significance.

When the control and experimental groups are separated into three groups, we can see that there is quite a large mean difference between group 1 controls (10.73) and group 1 experimental participants (17.06) though this was not statistically significant (p = 0.26). There was only an approximate 2-point difference in improvement between group 2 controls (8.41) and experimental group participants (10.56), and between group three controls (5.82) and experimental group participants (6.14) there was practically no difference at all.

Table 3

Short-Term English Learning Goals

Focus of Goal	Number of Goals
Improving Reading Skills	13
Improving Speaking Skills	11
Improving Writing Skills	8
Improving Listening Skills	6
Improving Grammar	5
Improving Test Scores/Passing a Test	5
Improving Pronunciation	1
Many Skills	1

Table 3 shows that when asked to create short-term English learning goals the most common goals were related to improving English reading skills, the second most common short-term reading goals were related to speaking skills followed by writing skills.

Table 4

Short-Term Writing Goals

Focus of Goal	Number of Goals
Grammar	13
Conveying Opinion	9
Sentences	8
Vocabulary	7
Writing Essays	7
Write Faster	4
Paraphrasing	3
Conclusion	2
Topic Sentences	2
Structure	1
Tense	1
Writing a Letter	1

Table 4 shows that when asked to write short-term goals related to writing the most common area that students wished to improve was their grammar. This was followed by conveying your opinion and then writing sentences, with vocabulary and writing essays also proving popular.

Table 5

Long-Term English Learning Goals

Focus of Goal	Number of Goals
Communicating with Foreign People	16
Speaking More Fluently	14
Improving Test Scores/Passing a Test	8
Reading	7
Using English at Work	6
Acquiring Vocabulary	5
Studying Abroad	2
Improving Writing Skills	2
Grammar	1
Give Reason for Opinion	1
Listening	1

The most common long-term English learning goal, as seen in Table 5, was to communicate with foreign people closely followed by speaking more fluently. Many goals used the term "fluently," and one student said, "as a native person." Improving test scores such as TOEIC and TOEFL was also commonly cited as a long-term goal. Some answers were career specific such as "working in America as a magician" and being a "professional runner" and having to learn "English skills." Other answers were skill specific such as being able to "give a presentation in English."

Table 6

Long-Term English Writing Goals

Focus of Goal	Number of Goals
Write a Good Essay/Thesis	12
Professional Sentences	5
Writing for Work/Business Reports	4
Convey Opinion	4
Write at a L1 Level/Naturally	3
Write Quickly/Fluently	3
Writing Emails/Letters	2
Write a Presentation	2
Write a Novel	1
No Translation Tools	1
Summarizing	1

Table 6 shows that by far the most common long term writing goal was related to writing

essays or thesis (the meaning of thesis, as used by 1 student, could have been a dissertation or it could have meant a thesis statement: it was unclear). The second most common long-term writing goal was writing professional sentences followed by conveying an opinion and writing work/business reports.

Table 7

How Much Did the Students Enjoy the Goal Setting Process?

Response	Number of Students
I hated goal setting.	0
I did not enjoy goal setting.	6
I enjoyed goal setting.	25
I loved goal setting.	14

Table 7 shows that most of the students enjoyed the goal setting process. 55% said they enjoyed the process and 31% said they loved it. 13% said that they did not enjoy the process and none of the students said that they hated it.

Table 8

How Useful did the Students Find the Goal Setting Process for Improving Their English?

Response	Number of Students
Not Useful	1
Somewhat Useful	5
Useful	26
Extremely Useful	13

Table 8 shows that most students perceived the goal setting process to be helpful for improving their English. 29% found it extremely useful, 58% found it to be useful, 11% found it to be somewhat useful. However, 1 student (2%) said that it was not useful at all.

Table 9

How Useful did the Students Find the Goal Setting Process for Improving Their English Writing Skill?

Response	Number of Students
Not Useful	2
Somewhat Useful	4
Useful	23
Extremely Useful	16

Table 9 shows that the majority of students thought that the goal setting process was

beneficial in improving their English writing skill, 36% said it was extremely useful, 51% said it was useful, and 9% said it was somewhat useful. However, 2 students (4%) said that it was not useful.

Table 10

Did the Students Feel They Had Achieved Any of Their Short-Term English Learning Goals by the End of This Course?

Response	Number of Students
Yes	38
No	7

When asked if they felt they had achieved any of their short-term English learning goals on the final day of the course 38 students (84%) said yes and 7 students (16%) said no.

Table 11

Did the Students Feel They Had Achieved Any of Their Short-Term English Writing Goals by the End of This Course?

Response	Number of Students
Yes	39
No	6

When asked if they felt they had achieved any of their short-term English writing goals on the final day of the course, the answer was similar to when they were asked about short-term English learning goals: 39 students (87%) said yes and 6 students (13%) said no.

Table 12

Will the Students Continue to Work Towards Achieving the Goals They Set?

Response	Number of Students
Yes	23
Maybe	19
No	3

Table 12 shows that 23 of the students (51%) said they intend to continue working towards achieving the goals they set at the beginning of this course after the course has finished, 19 students (42%) said maybe they would and 3 (7%) said that they would not.

Discussion

From Table 1 we can see that both control and experimental groups improved

significantly over the length of the writing programme showing how the course was effective in enhancing the writing ability and English proficiency of all the students. The students in both classes were taught how to structure an essay, in terms of having an introduction, main body and conclusion. They were also taught useful grammatical structures and vocabulary and given lots of practice on writing and individual feedback on how to improve both their essay writing and their English as part of the 14-week course. The course included the writing of one assessed paragraph and three drafts of two 5-paragraph essays. The course also involved reading many exemplar texts, such as essays and articles in the textbook as well as extensive reading of graded readers.

Table 2 shows that the test group made a higher average improvement than the control group. The only difference between the two courses was the introduction of the goal setting treatment to the test group, implying that this treatment had a beneficial effect on their English essay writing ability. However, despite this mean improvement, the ANOVA and the t-tests in Table 2 show that this increase was not statistically significant. However, one 14-week semester is quite a short time to see drastic improvements in writing or English ability, so perhaps a long-term study might show a more significant improvement over a longer period.

Also, the sample of students chosen was from compulsory English classes of varying motivation and ability levels. The improvement was greater in the first group who had a higher level of ability (CEFR A2–B1) than the groups in the second and third iterations of the study (CEFR A2) showing that perhaps this treatment is more effective on those who already have a threshold level of English ability. The instructor of the classes also observed that the students in group 1 seemed more motivated and engaged more with the goal setting process along with the other reading and writing activities and assignments that made up the course. This might indicate that a certain amount of motivation to study English is also necessary for this process to be effective. This is also exemplified by the fact that the control participants in group 1 had a higher mean improvement than both control and experimental group participants in the other two groups suggesting that certain confounding variables such as classroom dynamics or higher motivational levels may have played a role in higher improvement seen in this group.

Table 3 shows that the most popular short-term English learning goal was to improve reading skills. This course focused on both reading and writing, in addition standardized English tests such as TOEIC (popular in Japan as a measure of English ability used by companies when recruiting) and IELTS and TOEFL (often necessary for studying abroad) focus mainly on reading skills in English, so it is unsurprising that students in Japan will put a high necessity on improving their English reading skills.

The second most popular short-term English learning goal was improving speaking and the third was writing. Students know they must write essays to pass this course so, improving their writing skills will be instrumental in helping them pass and obtain good grades. The students are also enrolled in compulsory discussion and debate courses as part of their freshman year at this university. The university as an institution is taking steps, as part of a larger initiative

within Japan, to improve the English communicative ability of university graduates and in turn the workforce. The reasoning being advancement towards optimum participation in the globalized economy.

Most students also seem to be aware of the growing necessity for them to improve their English communication skills. Table 5 presents a similar trend with the second most common long-term English learning goal being to speak English fluently. The most popular goal was to be able to communicate with foreign people. This seems to show that the students long-term aim is to learn practical English for spoken communication and they place less importance on writing as a long-term goal. The third most common long-term goal was related to tests implying many students are often motivated to learn English to pass or achieve well on tests. This is unsurprising because, as mentioned, many high tier companies in Japan require a certain score on high stakes tests such as the TOEIC to qualify for a position or promotion (Kawabata, 2024). The most common long-term writing goal was to be able to write an essay or thesis which suggests the highest target for English writing is to be able to write a strong academic essay in the target language, which is a logical final goal (Table 6).

In Table 4, the most popular category of short-term writing goals was grammar. Students clearly believe grammar to be an important element of writing in English and feel that this is an area in which they are weak and need improvement. The other compulsory English courses, which students receive in their first year at this university focus mainly on speaking and there is little focus on grammar, except in this Reading and Writing course, so this might be seen as a cry for more explicit form focused instruction, lacking in other courses. The students also added to or edited these goals after receiving feedback on the pre-test essays including feedback on grammatical errors such as punctuation, tense and the lack or misuse of articles and so many of their goals naturally reflected this feedback. However, conveying opinion was the second most common goal category signifying they also place high importance on expressing meaning. Third was related to sentence forming and joint fourth were essay writing and vocabulary related goals. Some of the other feedback they were given on the pretest was related to the structure of their essays, for example forming full sentences and having topic sentences for paragraphs, the need to paraphrase (the 6th most common goal) their thesis as a conclusion and the need to use better vocabulary and this feedback also seems to have influenced their goals.

Tables 7, 8 and 9 show that the majority of students enjoyed the process of setting their own goals and found it useful for improving their English and writing skills. According to Dörnyei (2001), goal setting promotes motivation because it increases the students' appreciation of the instrumental value of learning English, for example a connection is made clear between learning English and a goal the students are already striving for, such as getting a good job. This *initial motivation* is part of Dörnyei's *process model* (2001) where he states that this phase increases excitement among the students about what they are going to learn. Tables 10 and 11 show that the vast majority of students felt they had achieved some of their short-term goals for English learning and writing in English. The experience of regular success, which can be

achieved by individual goal setting, is part of the *maintaining and protecting motivation* phase of Dörnyei's *process model* (2001). Table 12 indicates that the majority of the students also wished to continue working towards the goals they had set in this course and so the motivation this process fostered appears to be deep rooted and long lasting.

Conclusion

The process of individual goal setting has been shown to have some benefits for a Japanese university level EFL writing course and while there was no statistically significant improvement between the control and experimental groups, average improvement on essay scores did show that the process of goal setting had some kind of positive effect. The students also enjoyed the process, found it useful for improving their English and writing skills and it helped instill long-lasting motivation to study and achieve the goals set. After reflection on the study and comparison with other similar research, the authors have some considerations for how the process could be improved. One improvement could be the inclusion of students' brainstorming strategies to help them achieve their goals. This consciousness raising activity would be metacognitively beneficial for the students. Strategies could also be suggested by the teacher and these learning strategies could be used both in and outside the classroom, as suggested by Bloom (2013). In addition, more time could be spent on student's monitoring their own progress and whether their goals have been met. If the targets have not been attained, new strategies could be proposed for achieving them. Edwards (2013) supported the use of setting goals discerned through assessment rubrics as was the case in the process of this study, she also suggests that this be accompanied by the selection of suitable methods to achieve the goal and monitoring, for example by the implementing of a goal-monitoring record. Limitations of this study include the small sample size of the participants, the different levels of English ability and the short time frame of one 14-week semester. However, the results of the study offer some support to past research into the benefits of goal setting and indicate that individual goal setting should be included in EFL syllabi. Therefore, more research into the best methods of employing individual goal setting into different types of EFL courses would be advantageous to our field.

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