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Tracing Agency Development in a Young EFL Learner: A Shared Reading Case Study

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Abstract

Purpose

This study investigates the developmental trajectory of personal agency in a young EFL learner during an eight-week shared reading program. It explores how the learner moved from socially guided participation toward more proactive and self-directed engagement, as he progressively enacted agency within a socially mediated shared reading context. Particular attention is given to how classroom and home literacy experiences provided conditions that enabled this development.

Main Theories or Conceptual Frameworks

Grounded in Bandura's (2001) social cognitive theory, the study adopts four core dimensions of personal agency— intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness— as its analytical framework. These dimensions guided the

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coding and interpretation of the learner's behaviors across classroom and home settings, allowing for a process-oriented analysis of how agency was enacted and developed over time.

Research Design/Methods/Participants

Using a qualitative single-case study design, the research followed a nine-year-old beginner EFL learner, Andy, over eight weeks of shared reading practice. The first five weeks focused on classroom-based shared reading, followed by three weeks of home-based rereading. Data sources included classroom recordings, teacher logs, semi-structured interviews, and over 800 LINE messages documenting home-based interactions. Through a systematic analysis of multi-source data, the study traced the learner's evolving patterns of agentic participation across contexts.

Research Findings or Conclusions

Findings reveal that Andy's agency evolved from externally guided participation to increasingly internalized self-regulation. During the initial five weeks, his engagement was closely aligned with structured teacher support. Subsequently, Andy demonstrated a recursive monitor-adjust-reimplement-reevaluate cycle; for instance, he identified comprehension gaps (monitoring) and applied classroom-learned strategies to mark complex words (adjusting). These behaviors extended to the home context, where he voluntarily initiated rereading sessions and shared personal interpretations (reimplementing), ultimately validating these strategies through enhanced self-efficacy (reevaluating). The evidence suggests that learner autonomy and literacy ownership were progressively enacted, while cross-contextual social mediation provided conditions that supported this development.

Theoretical or Practical Insights/Contributions/Recommendations

The study offers empirical insight into how the four dimensions of agency are enacted within an early-stage EFL literacy context. Practically, it highlights that

shared reading– when integrated with structured teacher guidance and responsive parental involvement– can create conditions that facilitate the development of agency and reading ownership. The study recommends that teachers and caregivers engage learners through dialogic reading and open-ended questioning to create sustained, interactive reading experiences that support the development of agentic learning.

Keywords: agency development, EFL literacy development, parental involvement, personal agency, shared reading

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英語初學者能動性發展之探究： 共享閱讀的質性個案研究

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摘要

研究目的

本研究探討一位EFL初學者在八週共享閱讀課程中個人能動性的發展歷程。研究聚焦於學習者如何在共享閱讀情境中，從初期較依賴外在引導的參與方式，逐步轉向較具主動性與自我導向的學習行為，並關注課堂與家庭閱讀經驗如何作為情境條件，促進此一發展歷程。

主要理論或概念架構

本研究以Bandura（2001）所提出的社會認知理論為理論基礎，聚焦於個人能動性的四個核心面向：意圖性（intentionality）、前瞻性（forethought）、自我反應性（self-reactiveness）與自我反思性（self-reflectiveness）。此四向度作為資料分析與詮釋架構，用以探討學習者如何在不同學習脈絡中展現、調整並發展其能

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動行為，並從歷程觀點分析其由外在引導轉向內化調節的動態變化。

研究設計／方法／對象

本研究採質性單一個案研究設計，追蹤一位九歲英語初學者Andy在八週共享閱讀歷程中的表現。前五週為課堂共享閱讀，後三週延伸至家庭重讀活動。資料來源包括課堂錄音、教師日誌、Andy與家長的半結構式訪談，以及超過800則記錄家庭閱讀互動的LINE訊息。透過多元資料的系統性分析與交叉比對，本研究描繪學習者能動行為在不同脈絡中的發展軌跡。

研究發現或結論

研究發現Andy的能動性展現經歷了從「外在引導參與」到「內化自我調節」的動態轉變。在前五週中，Andy的參與多與教師的結構化支架與同儕互動相互連動；隨後，他逐漸展現出「監控—調整—運用—評估」的循環機制，例如主動發現理解落差（監控），並運用課堂學習的策略標註難詞（調整）。資料顯示，這些行為進一步延伸至家庭脈絡，Andy開始主動重讀故事並向家長分享個人詮釋（運用），最後透過自我效能感的提升確認策略的有效性（評估）。整體而言，研究顯示個人能動性是透過學習者的主動參與和自我調節逐步展現並內化，而跨情境的社會互動則提供有利於其發展的情境條件。此一發展歷程亦顯示，學習者在不同情境中所累積的閱讀經驗與策略運用，能逐步轉化為穩定的學習行為，進一步強化其在面對新文本時的主動參與與理解能力。

理論或實務創見／貢獻／建議

本研究從理論層面補充了EFL識字脈絡中個人能動性四向度的實證性詮釋與歷程性說明，並指出能動性發展具有動態性與情境性特質。在實務上，共享閱讀若能提供學習者參與、表達與反思的機會，並結合適度的教師引導、同儕互動與家長參與，將有助於促進其能動學習與閱讀主體性的發展。研究建議教師與家長可透過對話式閱讀與開放式提問，營造具互動性與支持性的閱讀經驗，以促進兒童能動學習的形成與深化，並進一步支持其長期語言發展與學習動機的建立。

關鍵詞：能動性發展、英語識字發展、家庭參與、個人能動性、共享閱讀

Introduction

Contemporary foreign language education increasingly recognizes learners as active participants who shape their own learning processes. Bandura (2001) defines agency as the capacity to influence one's functioning and environment through intentional actions. His social cognitive theory identifies four core features of personal agency— intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness— emphasizing the dynamic interplay between personal factors, behavior, and environment.

Recent research has highlighted shared reading as a crucial social context for fostering children's agency. In these interactive encounters, children are viewed not as passive recipients of adult instruction but as active participants who co-construct meaning through questioning, predicting, and negotiating interpretations (Gavora, 2021). Relational perspectives emphasize that negotiated control and shared emotional engagement enable a sense of authorship (Kucirkova & Grøver, 2022), while teachers' "I wonder" prompts open discursive spaces for initiative (Houen et al., 2016). Collectively, these studies indicate that shared reading functions as a relational environment where agency emerges through dialogue.

Research has shown that shared reading fosters vocabulary growth, print awareness, and reading motivation in L1 contexts (Justice & Kaderavek, 2002; Mol et al., 2008; Sénéchal & Cornell, 1993). Despite its promise, the role of shared reading in supporting emergent personal agency in EFL learners remains underexplored. Beginning EFL readers often struggle with decoding and may feel disempowered by unfamiliar language. While shared reading provides rich input, little is known about how learners begin to act intentionally and reflectively within socially scaffolded classroom contexts.

This qualitative case study addresses this gap by examining how Andy

(pseudonym), a 9-year-old novice EFL learner in Taiwan, began developing personal agency during an after-school shared reading program. The study traces how Andy's moment-to-moment actions reflect growing ownership over his English reading development across both instructional and home settings.

Research Questions:

1. How does a novice EFL learner demonstrate personal agency during shared reading activities?
2. How does a novice EFL learner's personal agency evolve across the four dimensions during a shared reading program?

Literature Review

Learner Agency Explored

Agency is commonly understood as an individual's capacity to act intentionally, make choices, and influence their life circumstances. Building on this foundation, Bandura (2008) later conceptualized the self as an agentic system—a socially embedded mechanism through which individuals exercise intentional, self-regulatory, and self-reflective control over their actions. He emphasized that agency is cultivated through social mediation and reflective self-regulation, rather than existing as an innate trait. In this study, personal agency is examined as a socially supported yet increasingly self-directed capacity that becomes visible in shared reading interactions.

From a sociocognitive perspective, learner agency is further understood as learners' capacity to act intentionally and regulate their learning (Bandura, 2001), shaped by the interaction between individual action and contextual affordances (Gao, 2010). Drawing on complex dynamic systems theory, Larsen-Freeman (2019) conceptualizes agency as a relational, emergent, and context-sensitive achievement. Similarly, Mercer (2012) describes learner agency as a complex and dynamic system shaped by the interaction of learners' beliefs and contextual factors. Within EFL

contexts, learner agency has increasingly been recognized as a critical construct, though its development in specific learning environments remains under-explored (Hennebry-Leung et al., 2023). In literacy-related contexts, recent studies have shown that agency can be observed through learners' participation, interaction, and negotiated control during shared reading activities (Gavora, 2021; Kucirkova & Grøver, 2022). Building on these perspectives, the present study adopts Bandura's (2001) four-dimensional framework to examine how learner agency is enacted and developed in an EFL shared reading context.

Shared Reading Contexts

Shared reading, a collaborative literacy practice involving joint attention, dialogue, and emotional engagement between adults and children (Bus et al., 1995; Drew, 2021; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002), has long been recognized for its cognitive and social benefits. Research in early literacy has emphasized the importance of socially interactive and literacy-rich environments, where modeling, guided practice, and responsive adult support contribute to children's literacy development (Morrow, 2020). Recent meta-analytic evidence further demonstrated that shared book reading has a significant positive impact on ESL/EFL learners' language and literacy development, particularly when interactive and scaffolded elements are incorporated (Li & Pang, 2025). Shared reading provides a context in which children's agency can be co-constructed and expressed. Kucirkova and Grøver (2022) explored how the attitudes of 24 Norwegian parents of children aged 1-4.5 years toward shared book reading shape young children's reading experiences and agency. Their interviews showed that shared control and physical presence were central to meaningful parent-child reading experiences, emphasizing that agency in reading is relational, embodied, and co-constructed between adult and child. Gavora (2021) demonstrated how children display volition, questioning, and self-monitoring during shared reading, showing that agency can be empirically traced through concrete reading behaviors. These findings

frame shared reading as an interactive space where children's voices, choices, and interpretations are integral to literacy learning. In EFL settings, shared reading presents unique challenges and opportunities. Unlike native speakers, EFL learners often struggle with unfamiliar phonetic structures, syntax, and vocabulary, which can impede comprehension and engagement (Webb, 2009). As a result, effective scaffolding strategies are essential to ensure that shared reading fosters both language acquisition and literacy development. One common scaffolding technique in an EFL classroom is teacher modeling, where teachers read fluently, clarify unfamiliar vocabulary, and pose comprehension questions to facilitate understanding (Gibbons, 2015; Tsou & Hung, 2008).

These findings underscore the pedagogical value of shared reading as a scaffolded literacy practice, particularly in EFL contexts where linguistic barriers can hinder comprehension. Beyond its cognitive and linguistic benefits, shared reading may also serve as a fertile site for agency development. When learners interpret stories, make predictions, or relate texts to their experiences, they begin to exercise voice, choice, and strategic participation—hallmarks of agentic behavior. This raises an important question: how do young EFL learners develop and enact agency within shared reading interactions?

Theoretical Framework: Bandura's Core Features of Agency

Much less is known about how early-stage EFL children exhibit agency. Given the linguistic demands, it is important to examine how young learners negotiate meaning—acts that embody intentionality and self-regulation. To trace the developmental process of an EFL learner, this study is grounded in Bandura's (2001) four core features of personal agency. These dimensions provide a generative lens for understanding how agency is enacted as a situated and evolving capacity:

- **intentionality:** Refers to the learner's capacity to initiate purposeful action and express goals, such as volunteering to read or asking text questions.

- **forethought:** Involves anticipating outcomes and setting short-term goals, visible when learners make predictions about story events or plan comprehension strategies.

- **self-reactiveness:** Focuses on regulating effort and adapting strategies. It is marked by monitoring, understanding, and adjusting behavior through a cycle of action and re-implementation.

- **self-reflectiveness:** Represents the metacognitive capacity to evaluate one's performance. It requires causal appraisal of prior effort and the formulation of next-step plans for improvement.

By integrating these dimensions, the present study reinterprets concrete reading behaviors as theoretically grounded agentic acts, providing a structured mechanism to examine Andy's progression.

Methodology

This qualitative case study employs a revelatory case design to examine how scaffolded interactions foster personal agency in an EFL shared reading context. Bandura's (2001) four dimensions served as sensitizing constructs. Analytically, Andy's agentic moves were examined within the social interactions among the teacher, peers, and his mother to ensure a contextualized understanding. To bridge theory with empirical evidence, Bandura's dimensions were operationalized into observable behaviors as summarized in Table 1.

To ensure analytical rigor, explicit decision rules differentiated agency from routine participation:

- **intentionality & forethought:** Coded only for student-initiated actions or goals; compliant repetitions or echoing teacher prompts were excluded (as Negative Case).

Table 1
Operationalization and Coding Criteria

Dimension	Observable Behaviors Indicators	Negative Case
Intentionality Initiating purposeful action and expressing goals.	Initiating reading-related actions (e.g., volunteering to read, selecting materials), showing willingness to participate, or expressing curiosity about text meaning.	Compliant repetitions or echoing teacher/peer prompts without self-initiated inquiry or goal-setting.
Forethought Anticipating outcomes and setting short-term goals.	Making predictions about upcoming story events, planning strategies for decoding or comprehension, or expressing expectations for improvement.	Passive agreement with others' predictions without providing individual reasoning or anticipatory logic.
Self-reactiveness Regulating effort and adapting strategies.	Monitoring understanding during reading, self-correcting pronunciation or meaning, persisting with challenging tasks, or seeking clarification from peers/adults.	Isolated corrections or persistence following a prompt without evidence of a “monitor–adjust–reimplement” cycle.
Self-reflectiveness Evaluating one’s own performance and understanding.	Commenting on one’s reading experience, recognizing improvement or difficulty, and evaluating personal strategies or emotional engagement with the text.	Vague affective remarks (e.g., “It was fun”) without causal appraisal or a clear link to a next-step plan.

Note. Behavioral indicators were synthesized from Bandura’s (2001) four dimensions of personal agency and empirically informed by studies of children’s literacy agency (Gavora, 2021; Kucirkova & Grøver, 2022).

- **self-reactiveness:** Required a complete monitor-adjust-reimplement cycle; isolated corrections or perseverance without strategy reuse were excluded (as Negative Case).

- **self-reflectiveness:** Required a causal appraisal of performance linked to a next-step plan, excluding isolated affective statements or vague remarks like “the story felt

easier” (as Negative Case).

Transitions between agency dimensions were identified when Andy demonstrated a qualitative shift in control. For example, a transition from Intentionality to Forethought was coded when his participation moved from mere willingness to anticipatory reasoning (e.g., predicting plot based on narrative logic). Self-reactiveness was analyzed by triangulating classroom transcripts with parental LINE reports. A transition was marked when Andy ceased to rely on immediate teacher assistance and instead employed the “monitor-adjust-reimplement” cycle independently, evidenced by his strategy transfer from the classroom to his bedtime reading. Similarly, a transition to Self-reflectiveness was only recognized when a causal appraisal followed strategy adjustment during interviews or later home sessions.

Research Context and Participant Selection

This study examines a home-based after-school shared reading program in Taiwan. The group had been running for two years and initially consisted of four students— Jo, Ann, Gin, and Jen (pseudonyms)— who had read together informally before the study. Andy, a 9-year-old novice EFL learner with a passion for stories, joined the group later, expanding it to five.

Andy was chosen as the focal case because his profile was theoretically informative for this study. As a 9-year-old novice EFL reader who had long struggled in school English yet remained highly engaged with stories and received sustained shared-reading support from his mother, he provided a rich context for examining how personal reading agency might emerge and shift over time. Andy initially joined the group during first grade but had to withdraw due to conflicts with other activities, such as piano lessons, homework, and physical therapy. As he entered third grade, his mother sought to reintroduce him to the group, believing its shared reading approach aligned well with his needs. He rejoined in third grade following a brief phonics refresher in August 2020. This marked his first sustained engagement with English

storybooks in a group setting, providing an opportunity to examine how peer interaction, teacher scaffolding, and parental support could foster his emerging agency in EFL reading.

Shared Reading Practices

The study was carried out over eight consecutive weeks in a private home-based setting. Each week featured one story from *Owl at Home* by A. Lobel, a leveled reader with a Lexile score of 490L. The book contains five short stories, each with rich illustrations and simple yet layered narrative structures. The instructional sequence was structured into two phases:

Weeks 1-5

Classroom-Based Scaffolding. Sessions followed a four-stage predictable format: (1) teacher read-aloud with expressive modeling, (2) discussion using illustrations and text as prompts, (3) peer-supported re-reading, and (4) reflection. To move beyond mere comprehension, I employed specific agentic prompts designed to shift interpretive authority to the students:

- Prediction prompts (e.g., “Look at the winter clouds; what do you think Owl will do next?”).
- Reasoning prompts (e.g., “What in the text or Gin’s previous comment makes you think Owl is lonely?”) to encourage building on peer ideas.
- Clarification prompts (e.g., “Which specific word helps us solve this puzzle?”).
- Affect-to-meaning prompts (e.g., “If you were Owl, how would you respond to the ‘bumps?’”). Crucially, I deliberately practiced ‘wait-time’ and invited peer-refutation (“Do you agree with Jo? Why?”), ensuring Andy’s agency emerged through negotiation with others rather than isolated teacher-student talk.

Crucially, I deliberately practiced extended “wait-time” (3 to 5 seconds) to allow Andy to process English input and formulate thoughts in his L1. I also invited peer-refutation (e.g., “Do you agree with Jo? Why?”), which required Andy to negotiate and

justify his interpretations within a social field rather than simply responding to the teacher.

Weeks 6-8

Home-Based Internalization. This phase focused on the transition from social scaffolding to the internalization of agency. Students reread favorite stories with caregivers. Andy and his mother co-constructed shadow-reading and a sticky-note routine to track multisyllabic words. Initially, the mother led the process by modeling how to select and mark unfamiliar words; however, she strategically faded her support over the three weeks, encouraging Andy to independently initiate word-selection and self-monitoring strategies. This shift from maternal guidance to self-directed reading was documented through parental LINE reports and reflective interviews.

My role as the teacher was multifaceted: modeling expressive reading, scaffolding comprehension with questions, and facilitating peer interactions. Reading discussions were conducted primarily in Mandarin (L1), allowing students to negotiate meaning, ask questions, and co-construct understanding with peers and I. Peer-supported re-reading functioned as a shared learning space in which students took turns reading aloud, offered word-level help, and occasionally echoed or reformulated each other's interpretations, creating opportunities for Andy to test and adjust his understanding through interaction. In selecting and analyzing excerpts for this study, I therefore retained not only Andy's individual turns but also key contributions from his classmates to show how his personal agency emerged within these shared reading experiences rather than in isolation.

Data Collection Methods

Data were collected over eight weeks to capture how interactions among the teacher, peers, and Andy shaped his developing agency. Four complementary sources provided a view of his learning process.

1. Audio Recordings

Five 60-minute sessions documented teacher scaffolding prompts and peer collaboration. Specific attention was given to Andy's participation and strategic language use.

2. Teacher Log

A 20-page reflective journal documented group dynamics, task difficulty, and instructional prompts, emphasizing Andy's willingness to respond and persistence.

3. Interviews

Two semi-structured interviews were conducted. The first, with Andy's mother (60 mins), examined observations of home reading behaviors and support strategies. The second, with Andy (30 mins), elicited his perceptions of progress, challenges, and sources of support.

4. LINE Chat Records

Andy's mother shared reflections via LINE (around 800 messages) regarding his spontaneous reactions to stories and learning strategies used at home.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using theoretical thematic analysis, following the standard six-step framework established by Braun and Clarke (2006). Unlike purely inductive approaches, this study utilized a deductive, theory-driven procedure to map Andy's agentic behaviors onto Bandura's (2001) predefined dimensions of agency. This approach allowed for a systematic examination of theoretical constructs within the interactional data. The analysis unfolded through the following six iterative stages:

1. Familiarization

Transcribing all shared reading sessions and reviewing teacher logs, interviews, and LINE messages to gain a holistic understanding of Andy's participation within his

social and relational context.

2. Generating Initial Codes

Identifying specific interactional moves, such as teacher prompts and peer responses, alongside Andy's verbal and behavioral meaning-making strategies. At this stage, codes remained descriptive and close to the raw data.

3. Searching for Themes

Initial codes were clustered into themes based on Bandura's (2001) four dimensions of agency. As per Braun and Clarke (2006), the theoretical framework served as a structured template for theme development.

4. Reviewing Themes

Themes were refined against the entire data set to ensure internal consistency. Strict rule-in/rule-out criteria (see Table 1) were applied to differentiate genuine agency from routine classroom compliance or passive participation.

5. Theoretical Alignment and Refinement

Since the themes were pre-defined by Bandura's (2001) framework, this stage focused on operationalizing these abstract constructs. I refined the boundaries of each dimension to ensure they accurately represented the context-specific manifestations of agency. This involved moving beyond abstract theoretical labels toward descriptive, data-near themes that captured Andy's specific behavioral shifts (see Findings section headings).

6. Producing the Report

Selecting representative excerpts to illustrate each dimension. Crucially, I preserved the original dialogic sequences (Teacher-Peer-Andy) and incorporated cross-contextual data to provide cycle-based evidence of Andy's agentic transformation over the eight-week period.

Researcher Positionality

I had an established relationship with Andy and his family prior to the study. His mother approached me when he was about to enter third grade, expressing concern over his readiness for formal English instruction. Through our conversations, she decided to enroll him in the shared reading group I facilitated. Her active involvement and detailed home observations enabled sustained dialogue that enriched the data collection process.

As the designer and facilitator of the shared reading program, I assumed a dual role as both instructor and researcher. This position allowed me to scaffold engagement while observing and reflecting on students' language use, affective responses, and emerging agency. My familiarity with Andy's personality and family literacy practices informed instructional decisions and interpretations. Aware of potential bias, I maintained field notes, triangulated data from multiple sources (e.g., classroom transcripts, parent interviews, LINE messages), and engaged in ongoing self-reflection throughout the process.

Ethical Considerations

Written consent was obtained from Andy's mother and other guardians, who were informed of the study's purpose and procedures. Pseudonyms were used, and all data were securely stored. Participation was voluntary, with the right to withdraw at any time. These measures ensured confidentiality, transparency, and adherence to ethical research practices.

Findings

This section presents the developmental trajectory of a novice EFL reader, Andy,

as he moved from socially mediated participation to increasingly autonomous reading behavior. Drawing on Bandura's (2001) four dimensions of personal agency—intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness—the findings trace how scaffolded interaction within a shared reading environment facilitated the gradual emergence of personal agency.

Across the five-week program, Andy's growth unfolded through four interrelated phases, supported by teacher guidance, peer modeling, and maternal involvement: (1) observing and imitating others' meaning-making behaviors; (2) expressing intentional goals and anticipatory understanding; (3) monitoring his own learning through strategic actions; and (4) reflecting on his progress and articulating his preferences.

To capture this process holistically, Table 2 summarizes the major patterns of Andy's agentive behavior across Bandura's four dimensions, integrating triangulated evidence from classroom observations, teacher logs, and parental reports. Each dimension is further illustrated through representative classroom and home episodes, showing Andy's transformation from passive observer to reflective learner.

From Visual Observation to Purposeful Inquiry (Intentionality)

Based on the operational framework summarized in Table 1, intentionality in this study was identified through observable indicators such as initiating participation, asking questions, and expressing curiosity about textual meaning.

At first, Andy mainly observed peers and relied on pictures to make sense of the stories rather than engaging with written text.

Andy is still a beginning reader. He doesn't show much interest in words yet, except for very familiar ones like 'winter.' Most of his responses are derived from images, and he hasn't been able to fully connect the text to the storyline." (Teacher's log, October 1, 2020)

Table 2

Analytical Synthesis of Andy's Agency Development across Data Sources

Dimension (Bandura, 2001)	Behavioral Indicators	Andy's Observed Behaviors	Parental Observations (LINE/Interview)	Teacher Reflections (Logs)
Intentionality	Initiation of goal-directed actions and active inquiry.	(Self-initiated Inquiry): Spontaneously questioned word meanings ("What are bumps?") to bridge comprehension gaps (Week 4).	(Engagement): Reported Andy's increased curiosity toward story vocabulary rather than just pictures (LINE, 11/12).	(Agentic Shift): Noted Andy's transition from passive listening to treating text as something he could act upon (10/1).
Forethought	Anticipatory reasoning and predictive logic.	(Strategic Prediction): Questioned character logic ("Why not melt snow?") and revised interpretations based on emerging textual cues.	(Narrative Reasoning): Observed Andy discussing character motivations instead of simply completing worksheets (LINE, 11/12).	(Inferential Growth): Recorded Andy's use of narrative sequence to anticipate plot developments (10/15).
Self-Reactiveness	Monitor-Adjust-Reimplement cycle in strategy use.	(Monitor/Adjust): Identified gaps in picture-based guessing and shifted to tracking patterned text (Week 4). (Re-implementation): Applied the upstairs/downstairs tracking strategy during home reading sessions (Week 6).	(Sustained Effort): Confirmed Andy's persistent use of linguistic tracking even when encountering difficult passages (LINE, 11/20).	(Scaffolding Adjustment): Observed Andy's ability to propose a hypothesis (10/29) and re-read text to verify understanding.

Table 2 (*continue*)

Dimension (Bandura, 2001)	Behavioral Indicators	Andy's Observed Behaviors	Parental Observations (LINE/Interview)	Teacher Reflections (Logs)
Self-Reflectiveness	Self-appraisal of progress and strategy effectiveness.	(Metacognitive Monitoring): Noticed decoding errors in long words and initiated a post-it note routine. (Self-Evaluation): Articulated learning gains ("Now I can read more by myself") based on past effort.	(Autonomous Appraisal): Observed Andy independently using tools (post-its) and expressing pride in his bedtime reading progress (12/7).	(Validation of Growth): Recorded Andy's developing pride in comprehension (Final log) and his newfound ability to monitor personal decoding errors.

Note. Table 2 synthesizes representative evidence of Andy's agency development across multiple data sources. Crucially, the data points are organized to illustrate a recursive cycle of agency (monitor, adjust, re-implement, re-evaluate). This analytical structure ensures that Andy's transformation is viewed as a sustained developmental process rather than isolated incidents.

For example, in a Week 1 discussion of *The Guest*, Andy anthropomorphized "Winter" by saying it had a hand that flipped over the owl's house— an imaginative interpretation not found in the text but grounded in the story's metaphorical framing of winter as a disruptive visitor.

Excerpt: Week 1 (October 1, 2020, Strange Bumps)

Teacher (Initial prompt): Let's look at this picture carefully. What do you notice first?

Andy: The snow is inside the house.

Teacher: Inside or outside?

Andy: Inside. It's already inside.

Gin (Peer observation): Owl opened the door. Andy: He opened it very big.

Teacher (Prediction prompt): What do you think will happen next?

Andy: Everything will get wet.

Jo (Peer prediction): The snow will melt.

Andy (Synthesizing peer input): Yes, because of the fire. Teacher: Show me where the fire is. Andy: (Points) Here. Next to the chair.

Gin: Owl is stupid.

Andy (Peer-to-peer response): Yes, Owl is stupid. He asked Winter in.

Teacher: What happens after that?

Andy: (Flips page) Look. The books. Teacher: What about the books?

Andy: They are ruined. All wet.

Jo: He looks angry. Andy (Personal conclusion): He shouldn't open the door again.

While Andy's remarks reflected narrative engagement, they were triggered by Gin's visual observation and Jo's reasoning, showing how Andy's intentionality was socially mediated through joint attention. His active flipping of pages (Flips page) and conclusion further demonstrate a move toward purposeful engagement with the story's logic. As noted in the teacher's reflection:

He still struggles to connect sound and text. He needs help decoding, and hasn't yet begun to see the text as something he can act upon. (Teacher log, October 1, 2020)

By the second week, Andy showed early signs of intentionality in shared reading. During the story *Strange Bumps*, the repeated appearance of the word "bumps" caught his attention and prompted a spontaneous question:

Excerpt: Week 2 (October 8, 2020, Strange Bumps)

Andy (Spontaneous question): So, what are bumps?

Teacher (Reasoning prompt): A bump is a raised area, like this one on my hand.

Jo (Peer scaffolding): It's like when a mosquito bites you.

Andy (Personal connection): I have one here!

This moment illustrates Andy's emerging ownership of meaning-making. Rather than waiting passively for answers, he captured the teacher's explanation and Jo's real-life connection to refine his understanding. This progression from silent observer to proactive questioner was scaffolded across both settings.

According to the teacher's log, Andy first misread "bumps" as snow but revised this idea through peer talk, later identifying them as the owl's feet— a refinement shaped by later home discussion.

When he heard the word 'bumps' again, he looked up and asked what it meant... He started to anticipate meaning based on pattern and sound."
(Teacher log, October 8, 2020)

"At first, he just looked at the pictures. Now, he actively asks questions— like in the 'bumps' story, he even asked me what it meant."
(Parent interview, November 29, 2020)

His mother linked this curiosity to their playful storytelling habits at home, which encouraged imagination and dialogue.

These reflections reveal that Andy's intentionality was not solely nurtured in the classroom but also deeply rooted in a home literacy ecology that prioritized dialogue, imagination, and critical thinking. His progression from silent observer to proactive questioner was scaffolded across both settings, laying the foundation for the first

dimension of personal agency— intentionality, the learner’s capacity to set purposeful linguistic goals.

Narrative Logic through Anticipatory Reasoning (Forethought)

In this study, forethought was observed through anticipatory thinking, predicting story outcomes, and reasoning about character motivation. By Week 3, *Tear-Water Tea* posed new linguistic and conceptual challenges that prompted Andy to question the story’s logic:

Excerpt: Week 3 (October 15, 2020, Tear-Water Tea)

Teacher (Reasoning prompt): Why does he make tea from tears?

Andy: Because he doesn’t have water. But why doesn’t he just melt the snow to make tea?

Jen (Peer support): Yeah, if you melt it, it turns into water.

Gin (Peer refutation): Look outside. There’s no snow outside.

Teacher (Clarification prompt): Maybe it’s not winter anymore.

Andy initially relied on prior story knowledge, but he revised his forethought after negotiating narrative clues with Jen and Gin. This interaction shows Andy’s emerging capacity for forethought as a socially co-constructed process: he moved beyond his initial hypothesis by attending to peer-highlighted visual evidence (no snow).

Gin’s observation that it was sunny, and that this was already the third story, helped everyone— including Andy— realize that time had passed. This was the first time I saw Andy using narrative structure to make sense of a character’s motivation. (Teacher log, October 15, 2020)

Andy’s mother also noticed this change in thinking. In a LINE message, she

wrote:

“I really like it when children can discuss stories after reading. I dislike copying reading worksheets– it leaves no room for thinking.” (LINE chat, November 12, 2020)

Such anticipatory reasoning marks the emergence of forethought, linking cognitive prediction with narrative understanding.

Strategic Adjustment and Reading Routines (Self-Reactiveness)

Self-reactiveness was traced through Andy’s ability to monitor comprehension, persist with a challenge, and adjust strategies during shared reading. By Weeks 4 and 5, Andy demonstrated increasing signs of *self-reactiveness*, defined by Bandura (2001) as the ability to regulate one’s actions through self-monitoring, strategic adjustment, and sustained re-implementation.

In Week 4 *Upstairs and Downstairs*, Andy’s shift in focus was evidenced by his increased attention to textual repetition and spontaneous inquiries about vocabulary, moving away from a reliance on illustrations. As noted in the teacher’s log (October 22, 2020): “He was trying to understand the meanings of the words... later, he told me this was his favorite story because he felt he had truly understood it.”

In the following exchange, Andy not only echoed the key vocabulary but synthesized it into a coherent summary of the character’s actions:

Excerpt: Week 4 (October 22, 2020, Upstairs and Downstairs)

Teacher (Reasoning prompt): Owl found two bumps in his bed.

What do you think they are?

Andy: Snowballs. Gin: Winter is gone.

Andy (Refining based on peer input): Maybe some snow stayed.

Teacher: Let's check the picture.

Andy: (Leans closer) They are round.

Teacher: "Owl moved his right foot up and down. The bump moved." Why did it move? Andy: Because the foot moved.

Teacher: Then is it snow? Andy: (Pause) ...But it still looks like knees.

Teacher: What makes you think that?

Andy: Because it's under the blanket. ... (Later)

Andy: Look! The bed is broken.

Teacher: Why did that happen?

Andy: He jumped too much.

Teacher: Why did he jump?

Andy: Because he was scared.

Andy (Direct inquiry): So... what are bumps?

Jo (Peer comparison): Like a mosquito bite.

Andy (Synthesizing): Oh. Then it's like a monster bump.

In this episode, Andy's self-reactiveness is evidenced through a complete monitor-adjust-reimplement cycle. First, he monitored his initial hypothesis "snowballs" against peer feedback and teacher prompts. He then adjusted his strategy by moving from surface-level guessing to active evidence-seeking. Finally, he reimplemented his understanding by synthesizing peer comparisons to reach a more sophisticated conceptual conclusion, "monster bump".

Crucially, this was not an isolated correction. As noted in the subsequent home reports (Weeks 6-8), Andy continued to use this active inquiry strategy—questioning word meanings rather than relying on pictures—during independent reading, confirming that the self-reactive cycle had been internalized.

In Week 5 *Owl and the Moon*, Andy further demonstrated self-regulation by integrating scientific knowledge into literary interpretation. This episode highlights

how Andy's self-reactiveness was sparked by peer scientific input and his own prior knowledge.

Excerpt: Week 5 (October 29, 2020, Owl and the Moon)

Teacher (Reasoning prompt): Why is Owl looking at the moon?

Ann (Peer scientific input): Because the Earth is rotating.

Andy (Building on peer input): The Earth moves too. When you walk forward, the moon follows you.)

Jen (Peer elaboration): It moves with the Earth's rotation. I have a book about the moon. Andy (Intertextual link): Oh! I've read that kind of book too.

Here, Andy responded not with a simple reaction but with a layered explanation that synthesized classroom talk, personal reading, and conceptual reasoning. By capturing Ann's scientific remark and Jen's mention of external books, Andy moved beyond the surface-level content to propose a hypothesis explaining the Owl's perspective. As the teacher noted: "He proposed a hypothesis to explain why the Owl felt the moon was following him" (Teacher log, October 29, 2020).

Across Weeks 4-8, Andy's self-reactiveness formed a robust monitor-adjust-reimplement-reevaluate cycle. In Week 4, he noticed that relying on pictures left gaps in his understanding (self-monitoring) and began to track the repeated "upstairs/downstairs" pattern (strategic adjustment). During Weeks 6-8, his mother reported that he chose to reread the story and consistently used the same pattern to check his understanding (sustained re-implementation). These moments highlight Andy's developing self-regulation: shifting from image-based recall to linguistic and conceptual reasoning, integrating prior knowledge to sustain meaning-making. In his later interview, he named this text as his favorite because he "really understood it," indicating that he had evaluated this strategy as effective (self-appraisal across contexts).

Evaluation and Affective Ownership (Self-Reflectiveness)

Self-reflectiveness involved evaluating progress, recognizing difficulties, and articulating strategies. In the final phase of the shared reading program, Andy increasingly displayed reflective engagement both at home and in conversation with his mother. During Weeks 6-8, after the storybook was taken home, he reread Owl at Home with his mother and increasingly revisited parts of the stories on his own.

His mother noted in a LINE chat:

“He often feels down before bedtime, so I try to cheer him up with funny stories. Yesterday, he started talking about the owl story, and the conversation spiraled. He said ‘tear water tea’ sounded hilarious and told me it was his first time reading the word ‘if.’” (LINE chat, December 3, 2020)

This showed his spontaneous curiosity about language and ongoing motivation to revisit stories on his own.

Angela later observed:

“Does this book come with an audio file? He keeps reading ‘Owl’ as the Chinese ‘ao.’ ... He reads it every day, but it’s still fragmented. Maybe audio would help him improve fluency. He sticks post-its on unfamiliar or multisyllabic words to remind himself– he’s very committed.” (LINE chat, December 7, 2020)

This co-constructed but increasingly self-initiated sticky-note routine reveals his growing metacognitive awareness– an embodied form of reflection in which he externalized monitoring through physical notes.

“We take turns reading one sentence each. He can’t yet read full passages on his own. I read the sentences aloud to help him with phrasing. He loves listening to stories, so we discuss the illustrations together. Since I studied English in high school and college, I understand the vocabulary and grammar.” (Interview with Angela, November 29, 2020)

Through these interactions, maternal guidance and Andy’s self-regulation merged into co-reflective learning, illustrating Bandura’s notion of self-reflectiveness— the capacity to evaluate and regulate one’s learning trajectory.

By the end of the program, Andy was able to articulate the benefits of shared reading and identify which strategies supported his growth:

“I think learning English through stories is really interesting. The stories are fun, and class helped me learn many words. Now I can understand some simple sentences on my own. My mom also read with me, one sentence at a time. I like reading longer stories because it’s easier to understand the story. Since I was little, I’ve read stories with my mom. She always told me stories.” (Interview with Andy, November 29, 2020)

Andy’s self-reflectiveness likewise appeared as a monitor-adjust-reimplement-reevaluate cycle around his difficulties with long words. Noticing that he repeatedly stumbled over multisyllabic vocabulary, he and his mother began marking these words with sticky notes and taking turns rereading the marked sentences aloud, turning brief breakdowns into a shared focus of reflection. Subsequent LINE messages showed that he later initiated rereading of the post-it words on his own before bedtime, reusing the sticky-note routine without prompting. In his final interview, he linked this practice to being able to “read more by myself” and “understand simple sentences,” suggesting that he evaluated the routine as effective and intended to carry it forward into future reading.

These statements show that Andy not only experienced cognitive growth but also developed affective ownership over the reading process. His recognition of learning gains, preferred reading styles, and collaborative learning history points to a reflective stance on his own literacy journey. The sustained interplay between classroom scaffolding, maternal support, and self-evaluation empowered Andy to view himself not merely as a recipient of instruction but as an active and reflective agent in his own language development. This aligns with Bandura's notion of self-reflectiveness, in which learners evaluate their actions, monitor progress, and adjust their strategies for continued growth.

Discussion

Enactment of Personal Agency in Shared Reading

(Addressing RQ1: How does a novice EFL learner demonstrate personal agency during shared reading activities?)

This study examined how a young EFL learner, Andy, enacted personal agency within a scaffolded shared reading context. Building on Bandura's (2001, 2008) agentic perspective, the study views agency not only as a set of behavioral manifestations but as a socially mediated and self-regulatory process through which the learner actively shapes his own development. Guided by Bandura's (2001) four dimensions of agency—intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness—the findings show that agency was not a static trait but a gradually unfolding capacity, shaped by Andy's interactions with texts, adults, and peers.

While all four dimensions were identified, they did not emerge in a fixed sequence but appeared with varying intensity at different moments of interaction, echoing the view of agency as a fluid and recursive phenomenon (Larsen-Freeman, 2019; Mercer, 2012). Andy's verbal and behavioral responses reflected his growing authorship over his own learning process. For example, when Andy asked, "What does 'bumps' mean?"

during the second session, he exhibited intentionality by initiating engagement with the text; this question formed part of a longer cycle in which he noticed a recurring word, negotiated its meaning with others, and then reused it in later talk. His ability to make predictions— such as inferring that Owl might be lonely before inviting Winter—demonstrated forethought and interpretive reasoning. Across later sessions, Andy demonstrated strategic self-reactiveness through behaviors that satisfied the explicit rule-in criteria for a complete regulatory cycle. For instance, he paused to decode unfamiliar words or summarize a plot pattern, and later reused the adjusted strategy when rereading these stories at home. By the final sessions, self-reflectiveness emerged as he articulated learning gains and evaluated his own performance. His comment that he “now knows how to read long words” was coded as self-reflectiveness because it was linked to a causal appraisal of past effort and a continued next-step plan (i.e., independent practice).

These behaviors parallel empirical evidence from L1 literacy contexts, where children’s questioning, anticipation, and self-monitoring have been identified as observable markers of agency (Gavora, 2021; Kucirkova & Grøver, 2022). Like the preschool participants in Kucirkova and Grøver’s (2022) study, Andy’s agentive acts were relationally co-constructed through shared emotional engagement and negotiated control during reading. Similarly, his curiosity and monitoring behaviors resemble the volition and literary production components found in Gavora’s (2021) parental reports, suggesting that these patterns of agency can also manifest among school-aged EFL beginners when scaffolded interaction is provided.

Although most existing studies examine preschool or L1 learners, this case extends such insights to a nine-year-old beginner in a low-exposure EFL setting, showing that similar relational and dialogic processes can foster agency across linguistic and contextual boundaries. These moment-by-moment behaviors align with Bandura’s (2001) notion that agency includes the capacity to set goals, regulate actions, and reflect on outcomes. As Mercer (2012) and Biesta and Tedder (2007) argue, agency

emerges within relational and contextual settings. Andy's capacity to act intentionally and reflectively was nurtured through the teacher's prompts, peer participation, and his mother's at-home engagement. Thus, even young novice learners can exhibit meaningful personal agency when embedded in a linguistically responsive and emotionally secure environment.

Developmental Progression of Agency Dimensions

(Addressing RQ2: How does a novice EFL learner's personal agency evolve across the four dimensions during a shared reading program?)

While the previous section established that Andy, a novice EFL learner, was capable of enacting personal agency, a closer examination across the five-week classroom program and the subsequent three-week home reading period reveals a clear developmental progression aligned with Bandura's four dimensions of agency. These dimensions did not appear simultaneously but unfolded dynamically and recursively across school and home interactions (Larsen-Freeman, 2019; Mercer, 2012).

During the initial classroom sessions, intentionality was observable in Andy's eagerness to participate. He frequently asked about unfamiliar words, volunteered to reread lines, and expressed a desire to revisit certain stories. These moments signaled his emerging initiative and goal-oriented engagement. As he became more comfortable in the group, forethought emerged. Andy began making predictions about plot developments and connecting earlier events to new situations, for example, asking, "Will he cry again later?" based on the character's previous behavior. By the third and fourth weeks, self-reactiveness was increasingly evident and was coded according to the monitor-adjust-reimplement cycle criteria. Andy adjusted his reading strategies, paused to decode difficult words, summarized story events, and drew on prior knowledge from science class to interpret key story events, and drew on prior knowledge from science class to enhance his understanding of the text. In the three weeks following the classroom program, Andy continued reading the books at home

with his mother. It was during this period that self-reflectiveness became more prominent. He began using sticky notes to mark unfamiliar words, voiced how rereading helped him gain confidence, and told his mother that he could “read more by myself now.”

Across these weeks, self-reactiveness was visible as a full monitor-adjust-re-implement-re-evaluate cycle: Andy realized that relying on pictures was not enough, shifted to tracking the repeated “upstairs/downstairs” pattern, reused this strategy when rereading the story at home, and later named it as the reason he “really understood” that episode. A similar cycle characterized his self-reflectiveness: noticing recurring difficulty with long words, he adopted the post-it routine with his mother, independently revisited the marked items during bedtime reading, and eventually linked this practice to his sense that he could “read more by myself now.”

These metacognitive reflections, captured through LINE messages and interviews with his mother, reveal an increasing awareness of his learning process and growth. However, Andy’s case extends these insights to a school-aged EFL learner who was already literate in his L1 but a novice in English. In line with Bandura’s (2008) conception of the self as an agentic system, Andy’s developing agency reflected both social mediation and emerging self-regulation, demonstrating how external scaffolding can gradually be internalized as self-directed learning. Taken as a whole, this eight-week arc supports the view that that agency is not static but evolves through recursive interactions across time and context.

Pedagogical Implications

Shared Reading as a Space for Emergent Agency

The present findings extend prior L1-based research (Bus et al., 1995; Kucirkova & Grøver, 2022; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002) by demonstrating that shared reading can also function as a site for emergent agency in low-exposure EFL contexts. Consistent

with L1 findings, shared reading offers both linguistic input and a safe, dialogic space for meaning negotiation and agency development. Peer collaboration provided models of language use and fostered Andy's sense of belonging and initiative.

Andy's development across Bandura's (2001) four dimensions demonstrates that personal agency can emerge meaningfully even at the early stage of EFL literacy when learners are given appropriate tools and space. This supports Mercer's (2012) notion of relational agency, where self-regulation and reflection are co-constructed through discourse rather than achieved independently.

The Role of Supportive Adults and Environments

Andy's case reinforces the idea that personal agency is contextually cultivated rather than innately fixed (Mercer, 2012). His agentic behaviors— such as initiating rereading, asking about words, or reflecting on progress— were shaped by responsive adult support both in the classroom and at home. The teacher employed flexible scaffolding, strategic L1 use, and affective prompts to facilitate comprehension and participation (Drew, 2021; Tsou & Hung, 2008).

At home, Andy's mother extended the learning through shared book discussions, vocabulary support, and encouragement. Her guidance was emotionally attuned and allowed Andy to explore texts in a low-pressure environment, contributing to his confidence and autonomy. This aligns with research emphasizing the social nature of literacy and the value of family involvement in fostering early agency (Snow et al., 1998).

Embracing the Strategic Use of L1

This study reaffirms the role of learners' first language as a productive scaffold in early EFL literacy development. Rather than hindering English learning, the use of Mandarin during shared reading sessions enabled Andy to negotiate meaning, clarify abstract concepts, and remain engaged with the text. When Andy encountered

unfamiliar vocabulary or complex story logic, his ability to articulate questions and comments in Mandarin allowed the teacher to provide responsive scaffolding. Such bilingual scaffolding bridged comprehension gaps while supporting gradual English development (Drew, 2021; Tsou & Hung, 2008).

Andy's use of L1 also facilitated his agentic behaviors, such as making predictions, voicing interpretations, and evaluating his own progress. As the shared reading sessions progressed, Mandarin served as a temporary yet meaningful scaffold that allowed Andy to internalize strategies for later independent application in English.

Toward a Nuanced Understanding of Young Learners' Agency

Although research on learner agency in second language education is growing (Larsen-Freeman, 2019), few studies have traced its development in young EFL learners through moment-by-moment interaction with texts, teachers, and family. This study contributes to that gap by showing how personal agency takes shape through verbal expression, strategic behavior, and reflection over time. By tracing Andy's evolving initiative and self-regulation, it suggests that educators should recognize and nurture personal agency even at the earliest stages of learning—through responsive instruction, meaningful tasks, and environments that allow young learners to act with intention.

To further explore agency development in young EFL learners, future research could adopt a child-centered approach to data collection and analysis. Integrating home-based literacy observations and multimodal learner artifacts could provide richer insights into how children negotiate meaning and exercise agency across contexts. Finally, longitudinal studies are needed to trace how early acts of agency in shared reading contribute to the development of long-term motivation, self-efficacy, and language learner identity. These efforts would contribute to a more situated and developmental understanding of agency that attends to the evolving interaction among learner voice, adult scaffolding, and task design.

Limitations

While this study offers valuable insights into the role of personal agency in EFL literacy development, its single-case design presents limitations in terms of generalizability. Future research could build on these findings by conducting longitudinal studies that trace the progression of EFL learners from early literacy stages to more advanced levels of comprehension. Comparative studies of different forms of parental involvement would also clarify how home practices can reinforce classroom-based agency development.

In addition, this study did not explicitly differentiate the distinct roles of the first language (L1) and the second language (L2) in the learner's meaning-making and agency development processes. Although the strategic use of L1 was observed to support comprehension, participation, and engagement during shared reading activities, the relative functions and impacts of L1 and L2 were not systematically examined. Future research could adopt a more fine-grained analytical approach to compare how different patterns of L1 and L2 use shape learners' participation and agency development in EFL literacy contexts.

Moreover, while Bandura's (2001) framework of personal agency provided a clear analytical lens for examining the learner's intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness, this study primarily conceptualized teacher guidance, peer interaction, and parental involvement as contextual supports for the learner's personal agency. As a result, the social-relational dimensions of agency were not examined as independent analytical constructs in this study. Future studies could integrate relational or interaction-oriented perspectives on agency to offer a more comprehensive account of how agency is co-constructed through social relationships in shared reading contexts.

Finally, as a single-case qualitative study, the findings are context-specific and may not be directly transferable to learners of different ages, proficiency levels, or

instructional settings. In addition, the researcher's dual role as both instructor and analyst, while enabling prolonged engagement and access to naturally occurring data, may introduce interpretive subjectivity. Future research could strengthen methodological rigor by incorporating multiple cases, cross-context comparisons, or independent analysts to enhance the credibility and robustness of the findings.

Conclusion

This study traced the emergence and development of personal agency in a young EFL learner during an eight-week shared reading program. Through close analysis of Andy's classroom behaviors and home-based interactions, the study demonstrated how his agency gradually unfolded across Bandura's four dimensions: intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness. Rather than appearing all at once, these capacities developed incrementally through scaffolded engagement with texts, teacher support, peer modeling, and emotionally attuned parental involvement.

In the early sessions, Andy exhibited initiative by asking questions and expressing curiosity, which marked the onset of intentionality. As he grew more comfortable, he began making predictions and monitoring his comprehension—evidence of developing forethought and self-regulation. These findings affirm that personal agency in young EFL learners is not innate but contextually cultivated through dialogic interaction, strategic scaffolding, and affective support. Shared reading served as a dynamic space where Andy was not only exposed to English but encouraged to act, respond, and reflect. The strategic use of L1 further supported his participation and meaning-making.

Overall, the findings underscore the pedagogical importance of creating literacy environments that invite young learners to take ownership of their learning journey and build sustained engagement, confidence, and identity as EFL readers. Ultimately, this study suggests that agency development in early EFL literacy represents not just a

cognitive milestone, but a relational achievement– a co-constructed act of becoming a reader.

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