

Examining the self-regulated learning practices in writing among EFL learners at the University of Duhok

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فحص ممارسات التعلم ذاتية التنظيم في الكتابة بين متعلمي اللغة الانكليزية كلغة اجنبية في

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الملخص

تسعى الدراسة الحالية إلى فحص ممارسات التعلم ذاتية التنظيم في الكتابة بين متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في جامعة دهوك. تم توزيع ١٢٠ استبانة على متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، كلية التربية الأساسية في جامعة دهوك، تم اختيار ٨٠ منها في القائمة المختصرة واعتبرت مناسبة للتحليل. اعتمدت الدراسة التحليل النوعي إلى جانب التحليل الكمي من أجل دعم التحليل الكمي للبيانات من خلال توفير الكثير من البيانات التفصيلية والغنية في موضوع الدراسة. تم جمع البيانات الكمية من خلال توزيع الاستبيانات على المتعلمين والمعلمين في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بكلية التربية الأساسية بجامعة دهوك. تشير نتائج الدراسة إلى أن المتعلمين يتبعون التنظيم الذاتي في الكتابة على مستويات مختلفة. لم يتم تحقيق مستوى دلالة في التحليل الإحصائي للبيانات. ومع ذلك، تكمن الاختلافات في استخدام الاستراتيجيات التي يستخدمها المتعلمون بشكل مختلف. الاستراتيجيات الأكثر شيوعاً والأكثر شيوعاً في الاستخدام هي التخطيط والمراقبة والتنظيم والتخطيط المسبق. لا يقوم البعض بالمراجعة، لكن البعض يتابعها بدقة. يتم ذلك في الغالب من قبل المتعلمات الإناث مقارنة بمتعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. تراجع الأنثى أكثر من الذكور. وفقاً للبعض، فإنهم يحبون المساعدة أو الرأي الثاني من الزملاء والمدرسين عندما يتعلق الأمر بالمراجعة / التحرير / التدقيق اللغوي. يقوم الذكور بمراجعة أعمالهم الكتابية أثناء الكتابة. يتوقفون ويتحققون من الأخطاء. تظهر النتائج أنه بينما يتجنب بعض المتعلمين مراجعة مسوداتهم، يتعامل الآخرون معها بجدية تامة ويجعلونها ممارسة متكررة للمراقبة الذاتية والتقييم الذاتي للأخطاء مثل التماسك / التماسك، والقواعد، والتهجئة، وعلامات الترقيم، وغير ذلك من عمليات التحرير.

Abstract

The current study endeavors to examine the self-regulated learning practices in writing among EFL learners at the University of Duhok. A total number of 120 questionnaires were distributed among the EFL learners at the Department of English, College of Basic Education at the University of Duhok, out of which 80 were shortlisted and considered appropriate for the analysis. The study has adopted qualitative analysis alongside the quantitative analysis in order to support quantitative data analysis by providing much detailed and rich data in the study matter. The quantitative data was gathered through the distribution of questionnaires among the learners and teachers at the Department of English, College of Basic Education at the University of Duhok. The results of the study indicate that learners follow self-regulation in writing at different levels. A significance level has not been achieved in the statistics analysis of the data. Nevertheless, the differences lie in the use of the strategies which are put to use by the learners differently. The strategies which were found most frequent and common in use are planning, monitoring, organization, and pre-planning. Revision is not done by some, but some follow it with precision. This is done mostly by females learners compared to EFL male learners. Female revises more often than males. According to some, they like assistance or second opinion from peers and teachers when it comes to revising/ editing/ proofreading. Males revise their writing work while they write.

They stop and check for errors. The results show that while some learners avoid revising their drafts others take it quite seriously and have made it a frequent practice to self-monitor and self-assess for errors like cohesion/coherence, grammar, spellings, punctuations, and other editing.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to have an insight of the EFL learners' writing practices and to view their self-regulated learning practices in writing. The study focuses on the types of writings learners practice and what all strategies they adopt while writing. The focus is laid on the "self" development as a writer in the act of writing where the learner is the core processor of his/her act. That is, how far writers take the responsibility of their writing and self-evaluate, self-motivate, and self-monitor their writing. This paper suggests that self-regulation practices have deep roots in the cognitive and behavioral psychology where the learners and their mind are the sole actors and responsible for the learning process. There is an emphasis on the use of various tools for testing and evaluating self-regulated learning practices in writing. It has been observed that, when students become engaged in a task, they take greater responsibility for their learning and their academic performance improve. The study also explored the emergence of these two practices by tapping down the resources from the various theories of learning in education, linguistics and psychology based on the Social cognitive theory. Learning of any skill, in this study, the writing skill is seen as a socially and cognitively situated activity enhanced in a functional and meaningful literary context.

The paper placed its emphasis on creating a community of learners who could-

- Make personal choices about what they read and write.
- Take ownership and responsibility for their writing.
- See writing as a process and a first draft as just that.
- Take risks in their reading & writing and collaborate in evaluating their efforts and progress.
- Apply and create strategies of their own those which are self-regulated in nature.

Literature review

Zimmerman and Kitsantas (2002), explored the effects of modeling and social feedback on self-regulatory writing, revision skill acquisition among writing revision skill acquisition among college students. The study took college level students and instructed them with a model. The model was administered and demonstrated revision strategy flawlessly. The students observed a model that initially made and corrected errors, but gradually, improved performance with the feedback received during their practice sessions that followed the modeling. Students were given feedback about the strategic steps that they performed correctly. The results of the study showed that observing a 'coping model' led to the great increase in writing self-efficacy and revision skill. The study also suggests that witnessing flawless performances does not convey the same type of information and that feedback may drive students' capacity to move to self-controlled and self-regulated levels. Hence, research evidence shows that "through modeling, learners can effectively be taught self-regulatory skills and their self-efficacy can be raised to enable the learners in applying developed self-regulatory skills and in skill development" (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2007, p. 20-21). Karen Harris, Tanya Schmidt & Steven Graham (1997) stated that self-regulation in writing process is critical. It requires the writer to be goal-oriented, resourceful and reflective. Highly skilled professional writers speak to the demanding and complex mix of composition and self-regulatory abilities involved in writing. Research on expert writers has further classified the importance of self-regulation in writing. For skilled writers, writing is a flexible, goal-directed activity which has been encouraged by rich source of cognitive process and strategies for planning, text production and revision. Skilled authors also engage in purposeful and active self-direction of these processes and strategies. As Flower and Hayes (1980a) note, a great part of skill in writing is the ability to monitor and direct one's own composition process. Nicole and Macfarlane (2006) critically analyzed the issue of giving full control to the learners regarding learning and assessment in the higher education scenario. It has been observed that although students had been given responsibility for learning in recent years, yet, there had been far greater reluctance to give them increased responsibility for assessment processes. Formative assessment and feedback might be used so as to support the capacity to self-regulate one's learning among learners as they progress through higher education (Nicole & Macfarlane, 2006). The ability to self-assess and self-reflect on one's learning is a key aspect of being a skilled learner. Lynne Hammann (2005) investigated writing beliefs, self-regulatory behaviors and epistemology beliefs of pre-service teachers in academic writing tasks. Hammann (2005) presented a clear understanding of the relationships among students' writing and epistemology beliefs and their self-reported self-regulatory behavior. "A clear knowledge of these relationships and their importance could serve to inform

instructors of pre-service teachers in planning course writing tasks and instructions” (Hammann. L, 2005, p. 16). “The instructors who have a clear understanding of their own and their students’ beliefs about writing, learning and self-regulation have the potential to produce strong skilled writers who can write and communicate effectively in their learning communities” (Hammann. L, 2005, p. 16). Bandura’s (1997) socio-cognitive theory states that self-efficacy and self-regulation affects learning performance and achievement of learners. Schunk & Zimmerman (2007) focused on improving self-regulatory competence and self-efficacy through modeling among learners. Their study takes in children’s learning needs and achievements. The study incorporates Zimmerman’s four phase socio-cognitive model. Modeling, according to Zimmerman (2007) is an effective means of building self-regulatory and academic skills which helps in raising self-efficacy. Schunk & Zimmerman (2007) worked on the influence of modeling in developing self-efficacy and self-regulation with regard to the reading and writing skills of the learners. Schunk & Zimmerman (2007) also focused on improving reading and writing skills through encouraging self-regulatory skills and self-efficacy of learners through modeling. Self-efficacy refers to learners’ perceived capabilities for learning or performing actions at designated levels (Bandura, 1997). However, self-regulation refers to self-generated thoughts, feelings and actions that are systematically designed to affect one’s learning of knowledge and skills (Zimmerman, 2000, 2001). Modeling has a positive influence on the development of self-efficacy and self-regulated learning of the learners. The learners are motivated as they adapt the skills more proficiently through modeling of strategies, skills and tasks. Such types of modeling influence the capabilities of the learners. Learners develop a self-belief through observation and practice of the modeled instructions. Self-belief is a belief to perform a task efficiently. Therefore, it is important to adopt a standard model for instruction and observation, so that, learners adapt effective skills and strategies by observing and practicing it.

Research Questions

- How do the learners at the Department of English, College of Basic Education at the University of Duhok, acquire greater skills from their own writing efforts?
- How far self-regulated learning practices are implemented EFL learners in their writing?
- Are there any statistically significant differences in learners’ self-regulated learning practices in writing, at the level of their target?

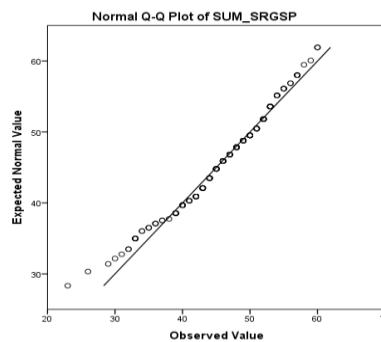
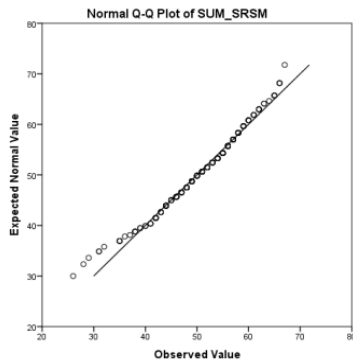
Methodology

The study has adopted qualitative analysis alongside the quantitative analysis in order to support quantitative data analysis by providing much detailed and rich data in the study matter. The quantitative data was gathered through the distribution of questionnaires among the learners and teachers at the Department of English, College of Basic Education at the University of Duhok. SPSS version 20 software was used for all the analysis. Various tests were applied in order to get the results, alongside, doing a comparative data analyses. The t-tests and ANOVA were applied to compare EFL learners’ self-regulated learning practices, and self-efficacy in writing, at the level of their target group (EFL), gender, grade (under-graduation/post-graduation) and socio-economic background (occupation/qualification of parents). The data of the teacher questionnaire was also put to analysis in the SPSS software. The analysis was done to obtain a more detailed explanation of the teachers' responses to the teaching and learning practices in writing and self-regulated learning, self-reflective practices of their learners in writing. Apart from the questionnaire survey, the study has also adopted the interview technique for performing the qualitative research. The secondary data sources were explored in which the method adopted for the data collection is an audio recording of the interview sessions held between the researcher and the participants. Another type of qualitative data was collected from the teachers through the questionnaire method. The teacher questionnaire consists of two sections, one for the quantitative data collection, consisting of objective type questions with a Likert scale of 5. Another section of the teacher questionnaire is subjective in nature that consists of three subjective questions to which teachers were supposed to respond according to their classroom observation and teaching pattern. The analysis for this followed the pattern of qualitatively analyzing all the written responses given by the teachers. The researcher shortlisted participants and incorporated each variable of the study like; background (ESL/EFL), level (under-graduation/post-graduation), and gender (male/female). All of these variables were taken care of while selecting the participants for the interview. Each variable was included while selecting the participants, and overall 11 participants were selected to take part in the interview respectively. The analysis of the qualitative data was done by paraphrasing and providing an interpretation of participants’ responses (Audio & Written). The interview included prepared structured cum discussion questions, which the researcher asked the learners one by one. The researcher gave full freedom to

the participants to elaborate their answers which paved the way for detailed discussions. The participants were more at ease and took this interview very seriously unlike the questionnaires, where the participants tend to get non-serious and are not one hundred percent honest with their responses. The interview technique is a more personal way to interact and become aware of the participants' writing practices.

Validity and Reliability

The validity and reliability of the responses was calculated. The Cronbach's alpha calculated for the students' questionnaire was 0.916 and for the teachers' questionnaire 0.914. Both the values confirm the reliability of the questionnaires. Any alpha value which is either 0.65 or more than this specifies reliability. Question number eight of the students' questionnaire showed that if it would have been removed, the reliability level would have been raised to 0.917. Questions ten, eleven, and fourteen of the teachers' questionnaire showed that if they would have been removed the reliability would have been raised to 0.915, 0.918, and 0.918 respectively. Researcher did not remove these questions because of only negligible increment which could have been achieved by eliminating them. The study also shows validity and reliability of the distribution of the data and responses of the participants in the questionnaires through normal Q-Q plots and histograms. These graphical representations are used to ensure the validity and reliability of the samples and responses of questionnaires.



Sampling

A total number of 120 questionnaires were distributed among the EFL learners at the Department of English, College of Basic Education at the University of Duhok, out of which 80 were shortlisted and considered appropriate for the analysis. The collected data was then put to analysis by the researcher. A total of 8 audio clips of researcher-participant interviews were recorded. All the recorded interviews were analyzed by the researcher and included in the research study. 20 written scripts were analyzed by the researcher. These scripts included three subjective questions for which responses of 20 teachers were collected and analyzed for the research study. Written drafts were also collected from the learners to study and relate them with the quantitative and qualitative findings and results of the study. The researcher included some drafts in the study and studied its style, techniques and structure implemented by the learners, and identified the relation of what the results have to say with respect to it.

Results and discussion

Quantitative analyses for the students' questionnaire survey

Table 1. Independent samples t-test for all scores vs target group learners

	Target group	N	Mean X	Std. Deviation(SD)	Std. Error Mean	t	p
Self-Regulation Total	Learners	120	113.99	13.76	.95	.022	.982
	Learners	120	113.94	14.85	1.70		
Self Overall	Learners	120	112.65	12.91	.89	1.15	.253
	Learners	120	110.33	15.84	1.82		

Table 1 displays the results of the independent samples t-test for target group level. The self-regulation at the level of the target group (EFL) was calculated. Although, small mean(X) differences do not imply any significant difference between the groups, however, these slight differences can be given importance from a qualitative point of view to differentiate between the level of self-regulation and self-reflection among the groups. Therefore, looking alone at the mean and standard deviation we cannot say that EFL learners' self-regulated learning practices in writing are distinguished or similar in nature. If we look at the means of the group at the the

case is still not quite significant. Though the slight difference in the mean values (EFL=110) can be taken into consideration that some kind of variation exists among the groups, however, it is not statistically relevant, but to some extent, they are qualitatively different in their efficiencies to self-regulate their writing. In both the cases, mean(X) is higher than their EFL companions. The null hypothesis states that the variation will not be significant in nature, thus, the null hypothesis is accepted here ($p>0.05$). The results show no such significant difference among the groups. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted as the p values hold no significance, all the values are higher than the significant value ($p>0.05$). Any p-value which is coming less than 0.05 is considered as significant but as in this study, the values have shown no such significance. But if we see qualitatively then the small differences in the mean(X) ratio can be considered because qualitatively it will make a difference.

No	Correlation coefficient	No	Correlation coefficient
1	.385*	11	.610**
2	.454**	12	.462**
3	.361*	13	.628**
4	.456**	14	.384**
5	.548**	15	.426*
6	.455**	16	.441**
7	.393*	17	.423**
8	.546**	18	.379*
9	.377*	19	.712**
10	.662**	20	.599**

* Significance level at ($\alpha\leq 0.05$). ** Statistical significance level at ($\alpha\leq 0.05$). statistical*

It is clear from Table (2) that the correlation coefficients ranged between (0.361-0.712), and all of them were statistically significant at the level of significance ($\alpha\leq 0.05$).

Mann-Whitney U	6408.500	6082.000	5760.500	6788.000	6529.500	6611.500
Wilcoxon W	28353.500	9008.000	8686.500	9714.000	9455.500	9537.500
Z	-2.576	-3.182	-3.755	-1.972	-2.458	-2.294
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.010	.001	.000	.049	.014	.022

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	p
SE_TOTAL	Male	138	58.29	8.64	.74	1.14	.256
	Female	147	59.41	7.99	.66		

Table 4 shows the difference between groups competency level for gender group (male-female learners). The results show no statistical significance at the level of self-efficacy for gender group. The total number (N) division among the groups is 40 male learners and 40 female learners. The difference between the mean (X) values can be supported qualitatively. Qualitatively this difference could be defined. Female learners stand out in their level than males. The female learners have higher mean (X) value in comparison to the male learners. This difference shows that female learners have slightly higher competency level than male learners. As the statistical significance is not present, in this case, the null hypothesis gets accepted. The p-value for this is .256 which is greater than the significant cut off value at 5% LOS ($p>0.05$).

Conclusion

The results of the study indicate that learners follow self-regulation in writing at different levels. A significance level has not been achieved in the statistics analysis of the data. Nevertheless, the differences lie in the use of the strategies which are put to use by the learners differently. The strategies which were found most frequent and common in use are planning, monitoring, organization, and pre-planning. Revision is not done by some, but some follow it with precision. This is done mostly by females learners compared to EFL male learners. Female

revises more often than males. According to some, they like assistance or second opinion from peers and teachers when it comes to revising/ editing/ proofreading. Males revise their writing work while they write. They stop and check for errors. The results show that while some learners avoid revising their drafts others take it quite seriously and have made it a frequent practice to self-monitor and self-assess for errors like cohesion/coherence, grammar, spellings, punctuations, and other editing. The results show that this factor is more or less similar among both the target groups. Self-assessment and self-evaluation was mostly followed by the learners in their academic writings. Learners were found to self-monitor and self-assess their writing quite often and with precision. They are conscious of their writing and their writing goals. The results show that learners seek assistance from teachers and peers. Most of the learners like to receive a second and professional perspective on their written work, not much difference was found among the target groups, they both follow the similar patterns more or less at all the stages of their writing task. The only difference which was recorded was in the extent and amount to which learners take assistance. Some were found to take more and detailed assistance, whereas, others just like to go to clear their doubts, to know the outcome expectations, and the best procedure for doing the task.

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