






Autonomous Learning as a Pedagogical Tool: Exploring the Perceptions of Teaching and Learning Practices at Writing Hub
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Autonomous Learning as a Pedagogical Tool: Exploring the Perceptions of Teaching and Learning Practices at Writing Hub

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Abstract

Even though there are incredible number of schemes to create EFL curricula, textbooks, and a range of professional development courses, Saudi Arabian EFL students' level of English language proficiency still has to be raised (Khadawardi, 2022). It has been determined that learner autonomy (AL) is an effective method for promoting learning. This study explores how EFL instructors and students view the value and efficiency of independent learning strategies for improving writing. What do EFL teachers and students think about the *writing hub's* learning strategies for enhancing autonomous learning as a teaching tool to assist EFL writing? And to what extent is the significance of autonomous learning noticeable in EFL writing classrooms? These questions were addressed by this study, which evaluated the optimal data of 77 female students and their eight instructors at Applied College for Girls at King Khalid University to get actionable implications and desirable outcomes. The results indicated that learners' autonomy could be achieved practically. The writing exercises practiced at writing classes; 'Writing hub' proved successful in enhancing autonomy among the learners. The *t*-test scores reject the null hypotheses, and the data was strongly normal and optimal to support the study. However, the findings also showed that the concept and notion of autonomy and students' role in it must be introduced before executing it to the students. In addition, most teachers indicated that learners' autonomy is helpful and achievable in EFL settings. They identified four main factors vocabulary, mind- map, the process approach, and peer feedback; and technology-based strategies worked best for composing writing and inculcating autonomy among the learners. In the future, more approaches can be applied to enhance and boost autonomy among learners.

Keywords: autonomy, EFL, writing hub, process approach, autonomous learner

Introduction:

Autonomy means the students' active role in managing their learning. Learner autonomy (AL) has been identified as an effective medium for facilitating learning. The learning process becomes more actively engaged by students, and instructors take on the role and responsibilities of facilitators. Instructors with significant experience are better able to promote learner autonomy based on the ages, levels of proficiency, and cultural backgrounds of their learners than less

experienced or novice instructors. The significance of AL in language acquisition has long been investigated through the definition of its many concepts and the functions that institutions, instructors, and students play in promoting and advocating for AL. In a Saudi higher education EFL environment, learner qualities that could support the development of learner autonomy and language acquisition in writing were defined by perceptions and practices of autonomous learning (Halabi, 2020). According to Alzubi et al. (2017), the learning autonomous (LA) style of education is designed for universities and as a result, it has several problems that prevent students from making independent decisions about what and how they will learn. Saudi universities require its first-year students to develop their capacity as autonomous learners. They ought to take charge, make choices, and project confidence. Additionally, they must strengthen their problem-solving, logic, and critical thinking abilities. However, the Saudi Arabian educational system as it stands emphasizes rote learning and instructor authority. Such a system of education is out of touch with the reality of the modern world. Additionally, it is unsustainable due to the lack of innovative learning activities that encourage learners to engage in autonomous study.

Even though there are countless initiatives to create EFL curricula, textbooks, and a range of professional development courses, Saudi Arabian EFL students' level of English language proficiency still has to be raised (Alrabai, 2016; 2019; Alqahtani, 2018; Moskovsky & Picard, 2018; Assulaimani, 2019; Allmnakrah & Evers, 2020; Sheerah et al., 2021; Alamri, et al., 2021; Khadawardi, 2022). Previous studies have reported that the deficiency in learning EFL stems mainly from the absence of communication in English inside and outside the classrooms, among other key issues, such as the dominance of passive learning, which remains deeply rooted in the Saudi educational system; the use of traditional methods of teaching; and learners' lack of enthusiasm (Alrabai, 2014; Khan, 2011; Rabab, 2005; Troudi & Al-Mahrooqi, 2014).

Therefore, Autonomy has become an essential concept in all learning but the field of EFL learning in particular. It has significant associations for both specific learners and educators equally. Little (2003) argues that learner autonomy is critical for at least three reasons concerning individual learners:

(i) Ikonen (2013) asserts that this claim is frequently supported by the fact that taking ownership and control of one's learning implies the presence of characteristics of effective learning, such as intrinsic motivation, metacognitive skills, subject knowledge, and awareness that learning is a process.

(ii) According to Little (2003), when students are actively engaged in their education, they develop a desire to study and are able to get past issues caused by a lack of motivation.

(iii) The third reason is more directly related to language education because of the nature of languages themselves.

Since the 1990s, one of the most discussed topics in language learning has been how to learn a language autonomously. In order for learners to become autonomous learners in the twenty-first century, instructors must be able to support them. Additionally, recent studies have

shown that numerous researchers take into account various aspects of learner autonomy process and perception, which may be divided into initiating, monitoring, and assessing. Understanding individual or self-directed learning preferences, establishing goals, designing study programmes, and creating learning opportunities are all part of the beginning process. Monitoring has to do with maintaining and engaging in learning, which includes choosing the right strategies, changing the learning curve, and compromising with others. Reviewing learning outcomes involves evaluating, as in editing an assignment and rating a piece of writing.

Autonomous Learning: Approaches to learner autonomy (LA)

The ability of the learner "to take charge of their own learning" is the fundamental concept of learner autonomy (Holec, 1981). We may claim that these learners have a solid understanding of the why, what, and how of their education, which is consistent with Little's (2003) definition of autonomy as "the capacity of detachment, critical thinking, decision-making, and independent action" (p. 15). As a result, the learners obtain and develop cognitive strategies for autonomous learning and use their knowledge and skills. Saffkova & Tuma (2012) claim that because the instructor acts as a facilitator and offers assistance to the learner, students in this atmosphere take ownership of their learning. In an EFL classroom, the learners become the chief and central elements in the learning process and the process becomes centralized, individualized, and self-directed. As a result, learners are expected to take the initiative in their education and make their own decisions in order to accomplish their own goals, with instructors being required to support this process by offering guidance and providing assistance to students as needed.

Over the past few decades, the terms "self-access learning," "independent learning," and "autonomous learning" have all gained popularity. Their popularity demonstrates how various factors influence how students take control of their learning at various stages of development. Benson (2001: 107 ff.) describes mainly six approaches to learner autonomy. According to the research by Melor, Azizah, and Zahidi (2018), ESL instructors employed a variety of strategies to encourage their students to become more autonomous learners. Additionally, the research supported giving students the chance to develop their own autonomy based on their viewpoints on learner autonomy. The learner-centered method of teaching writing in EFL classes is the main topic of this study. Learner-centered strategies place a strong emphasis on behavioural and psychological adjustments that allow students more control over their own education and aid in their improvement as language learners. This strategy is based on the types and methods of learning and using the language mentioned above. Boyadzhiev (2016) conducted a study based on Holec's (1981) enhancing learner autonomy theory and found that giving learners more control over their learning will likely make them more motivated. But from what researchers have seen in Bulgarian schools, attempts to implement the idea of student autonomy have only been partially successful. Many researchers and instructors say that learner autonomy is directly caused by explicit training of methods. Nonetheless, it is essential to identify strategies from non-strategic

learning processes that might be brought to awareness and modified through reflection. This does not imply, however, that styles and methods are irrelevant; instead, they are merely one way to achieve learner autonomy.

Learner-based approaches strive to divert students' attention from completing tasks to facilitating learning. Wenden (1991) said that LA could be done through reflection on learning materials and activities, such as discussions that make people more aware of available resources, showing and practicing ways to use resources, and explaining the theoretical concepts of language acquisition that guide the choice of resources and strategies. Legutke and Thomas (1991) suggested that language teachers who want to help their students learn better and get them ready to learn languages for the rest of their lives should use integrated methods.

Hussain et al (2020) and Niittylahti et al (2021) found that lack of confidence, instructors' overreliance, low motivation, short-term targets in classroom instruction, memorization, a strong urge to use their mother tongue, and general ignorance of self-evaluation negatively impacted learner autonomy in EFL learning of undergraduate students. Language skills need constant repetition and practical practice inside and outside the classroom (Ghazi-Saidi & Ansaldo, 2017). So, learner mentoring, training, and practices are needed to help learners take control of their learning, improve educational equity, and support learning throughout life (Alshenqeeti & Alrahaili, 2020).

Saudi students, after spending years learning, lack the confidence to draught an academic paper. While texting academic work, they make grammatical and spelling blunders and run into structural issues (Alharbi, 2017). Students can so study at their own speed and at their own time thanks to hybrid learning. Students can complete their writing assignments quickly with the help of e-learning technologies, making online learning productive (Putri et al. 2020; Kaden, 2020; Hussain et al, 2020; Niittylahti et al, 2021). Additionally, the blackboard greatly aids students in writing better by providing them with writing tips and guidelines (Al Tameemy et al, 2020). Many students find that online writing education is effective, sometimes even superior than conventional in-person instruction. College students are used to receiving immediate response from instructors about their submitted work.

For EFL instructors, getting improved results and fostering students' writing abilities remain challenging tasks. Research has shown that diverse approaches are used in EFL classrooms, although varied levels of process approaches were used in EFL writing instruction. Additionally, the outcomes showed that encouraging cooperative learning and instructor-peer feedback enhances the writing abilities of EFL students (Selvaraj & Aziz, 2019). One study examined autonomous learning and discovered a severe lack of understanding of the crucial function of learner autonomy in the Saudi EFL environment (Asiri & Shukri. 2020).

Since the 1990s, one of the most discussed topics in language learning has been how to learn a language autonomously. 21st-century education requires teachers to be able to support students to become autonomous learners. Rapid changes in the educational system, like the

growth of technology in education, the way languages are taught, and the explosion of information, show that there are significant changes in how knowledge works and how it is framed and shared. Therefore, recent studies have revealed the characteristics of autonomous learners in the education sector.

However, all frameworks excessively emphasize that the most important approaches for promoting learner autonomy empower learners with choice and control over learning, increase their awareness and metacognition, and fulfill their learning goals, needs, and emotions. In addition, they all highly emphasize the critical role of teacher support in this respect. Earlier studies such as those of Voller (1997), Benson (2013), Murase (2015), and Pham (2021) hypothesized that the main trait of the teacher as a facilitator is to provide psychosocial and technical support to students. In the most empirical and theoretical studies in the Saudi context, the researchers—Al Asmari, 2013; Alqahtani, 2015; Alonazi, 2017; Alrabai, 2018; 2019; 2021; 2022; Almusharraf, 2020; 2021 Alhejaily, 2020; Holbah and Sharma, 2021; Abalkheel, 2022; Fakih, 2022 investigated that the practicality of such strategies is yet to be established for the motivational and anxiety-reducing strategies, utilizing specific strategies to promote learner autonomy and metacognitive knowledge awareness and the regulation of one's thinking in the classroom. Alonazi, 2017; Halabi, 2018; Borg and Alshumaimeri, 2019; Siri and Shukri, 2020; Alshaikhi, 2020; Oraif and Elyas, 2021; Alharbi, 2022; and Albogami, 2022 found the causes of low autonomous language learning in EFL students are: anxiety, demotivation, disorientation, traditional pedagogy-centered classes, cultural and mother-tongue barriers, passive, dependent, lacking initiative and non-autonomous, less optimistic, lack of motivation, lack of independence, low proficiency in other curricular and social constraints, lack of knowledge and improper training, low proficiency in self-directed activities, high dependency on the teacher, lack of proper feedback, lack of knowledge and the improper training, management power, low readiness in decision-making abilities and involvement in self-directed activities, high dependency on the teacher, lack of teacher proper feedback, lack of training on how to develop autonomous language learning skills, and likewise. Learner autonomy has been deemed an effective channel through which learning takes place. In contrast to this phenomenon, research on writing hub autonomous learning in the Saudi higher education context is rarely discussed.

Autonomous learning practices to enhance writing

Recent research on writing autonomously revealed difficulties and complications, including demotivating factors, non-cognitive aspects, grammatical language aspects like collocations and phrasal verbs, and lexico-grammar integration errors (Holbah & Sharma, 2021), cultural barriers (Ilyas & Afzal, 2021), low writing proficiency (Alsamadani, 2022), a lack of engagement and students' beliefs in writing study (Takrouni & Assalahi, 2022), the majority of participants (89%) claimed to be independent learners, but their justifications revealed the narrow range of

autonomous learning methodologies. Though, it implies that both instructors and learners might not comprehend what it means to learn autonomously.

However, because they can employ technical tools, suitable tactics, and directions, students and instructors have a good attitude toward learner autonomy in writing. But what if the instructors and students are unsure of how the students' cultural origins affect their capacity to develop autonomous writing skills? In that circumstance, obstacles on the persons and institutional levels will prevent autonomy from being as autonomous as it may be. According to Khulaifiyah et al. (2021) learner autonomy requires the modernization of learning environments, inclusive classrooms, and strategies for the effectiveness of students' learning by tying students' experiences with the classroom and encouraging genuine reflection as they acquire new knowledge. The study's conclusion also discusses about how metacognition can help EFL learners in different educational settings become more autonomous.

Importance of autonomous learning

The four key benefits of becoming an autonomous learner are as follows. First, EFL students may only sometimes have their instructor's help; thus, they need to be able to learn alone. Second, because their education will be more personalized and focused, autonomous learners are more likely to succeed in their learning. Third, the skills required for self-determining learning will also be essential in the future, even on the job. Finally, even if autonomous learners do not always feel enthusiastic about their learning or occasionally lack motivation, they will typically succeed since they are more proactive in their learning.

Learner autonomy entails the slow and perhaps challenging process of learning how to learn. Learners must be given a chance to evaluate and reflect on various worthwhile learning activities to become autonomous. This will be accomplished by a joint student, peer, and teacher efforts. All three groups' evaluations of their own learning will be crucial. The autonomous learner must therefore acquire social abilities including empathy, tolerance, and a knowledge of differences, as well as the ability to communicate, debate, and negotiate with the instructor and other students. Some students may find it difficult to collaborate in this approach because they need to develop used to seeing learning as a social activity. Structure learner autonomy includes interaction with cognitive, metacognitive, emotional, and social dimensions as well as a variety of academic, intellectual, interpersonal, and personal skill developments. Developing learner autonomy will undoubtedly involve the extensive experienced in technological advanced instructor. First and foremost, the learning environment needs to allow students to take charge of their education. This might be done by giving them a chance to engage in peer and self-evaluation activities or negotiate with other students. Since certain students could require a different conceptual posture toward their learning, the instructor must present and explain the relevance of learner autonomy and the essential abilities. The instructor can support students who may not be able to set objectives or organise their learning at first by structuring the learning, offering

appropriate goals, defining or negotiating a timetable, or scaffolding the learning. Most students cannot naturally reflect; thus, teaching learners how to do so is another way that instructors can help and support their learning. The instructor's support can be gradually withdrawn as the students acquire the requisite abilities. It is crucial to avoid eliminating the support too quickly or entirely since, if students are not ready, this might be demotivating.

We must therefore pay close attention to the methods and exercises used in the actual classroom setting. Instructors can assist these students in utilising technological tools to improve their language learning by understanding the relationship between their outside-of-class self-directed technology-enhanced language learning experience and their learning philosophies (Yuliantini & Sukerti, 2018). Therefore, this present study seeks to construe how instructors' and students' views on the perception, perspectives, and practices of autonomous learning at the writing hub tool at the Community College for Girls, King Khalid University in Saudi Arabia, and to what extent they engage in developing it in the autonomous learning context.

Research gap

Numerous studies have been conducted on the development of learner autonomy and improving academic writing in the EFL classroom. Since learner autonomy is not a novel concept, it has been demonstrated to be a valuable pedagogical enhancement tool since the epidemic and even before that, when students assumed the role and responsibility for their learning in the absence of instructors and educational institutions. Some studies additionally conveyed their findings to enhance EFL students' writing skills. However, few studies investigated the role of independent learning methods in improving writing skills. Therefore, this study aims to fill the lacuna in knowledge regarding how autonomous learning practices at a writing hub help EFL students improve their writing.

Statement of Problem

LA is a necessity rather than a choice in a constantly transforming learning environment. Similar to childhood learning strategies, EFL learners can also learn language skills in a relaxed setting as children learn a language, basic literacy and numeracy skills, humor, and more. Since writing is the most difficult skill to master, it is believed that if students are given writing assignments and are taught critical thinking and problem-solving techniques on their own, with the support of a non-judgmental and encouraging mentor, they will be able to develop autonomy and become proficient writers.

Research Hypothesis

This study is motivated by a straightforward and simple research hypothesis. Since writing is both an essential skill and one of the most challenging ones to acquire. Even though several studies have detailed strategies for enhancing EFL academic writing, there is still room for improvement. The premise of this study is that providing EFL students with opportunities to practice writing at a 'Writing hub' will help them become more independent students and improve their writing. How do these autonomous learning practices prove as a pedagogical tool for enhancing writing?

Therefore, two variables are utilized in the investigation. The independent variable is writing hub practices, while the dependent variable is the enhancement of autonomy among the learner in the EFL classroom. The independent variable is the extent to which students utilize and practice writing hub activities to cater to their own learning needs and take responsibility for their own development.

Research Questions

1. What are EFL students' perceptions of learning practices at the writing hub to enhance autonomous learning as a pedagogical tool to support EFL writing?
2. What are EFL instructors' perceptions of teaching practices at the writing hub to enhance autonomous learning as a pedagogical tool to support EFL writing?
3. To what extent is the importance of autonomous learning noticeable in EFL writing classrooms?

Methodology

In order to examine EFL students' and teachers' perspectives of the significance and efficacy of autonomous learning activities at the Writing hub to improve their writing, this research has implemented a case study of thirteen (13) weeks of intervention. Additionally, a quantitative methodology is used in this study to address the research issues. The study began in February 2022, adopting autonomous learning strategies in teaching language skills, especially in the 'Writing hub' in the writing classrooms during the 3rd semester at Applied College for Girls in King Khalid University.

Instruments of data collection

To do the quantitative analysis of questions 1 and 2, two Likert scale questionnaires were structured. The students' questionnaire contained a total of 17 items; questions 1 to 5 explained the general views of students about autonomous learning. The remaining questions were based on a kind of scientific response scale in which respondents indicated how much they agreed with a statement, usually in intervals of five points: Strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, disagree strongly, strongly agree, and strongly disagree (Preedy & Watson, 2010). The teachers' questionnaire also contained 20 items; out of them, 1 to 5 described the general views about autonomous learning; the remaining was related to the effectiveness of teaching

practices to develop learner autonomy in the writing hub. The t -test statistical statistics demonstrated the effectiveness of independent learning at the writing hub in improving writing abilities. The t -test resulted, on the other hand, showed that students had more liberty in the classroom.

Participants

The total population varied for three research questions. First, a sample of 77 EFL students was collected from level 2 students to know their perception of learning practices at the Writing Hub to enhance autonomous learning as a pedagogical tool to support EFL writing. Similar to this, a sample of 8 EFL teachers was gathered to acquire their opinions of the efficacy of the pedagogical methods and strategies used at the writing hub to promote autonomous learning at King Khalid University's Applied College for Girls (Abha). The mean and standard deviation for that subset of cases will be reflected in the standard scores. Finally, without including the students' test results, the study is lacking. About 131 students' test scores (from 3 sections) were gathered for the test. Since the study concentrated on level 2 during the third semester of university, the test results of the mid and final exams (only essay writing grades) were compared using the t -test.

Data collection process

The study process starts at the commencement of the new semester in February 2022. According to the plan, the general looming problem of students' incapability and lack of confidence in writing essays was taken into consideration. Therefore, as the semester went ahead, with every unit, a sense of understanding and critical thinking was developed among the students. The 'Writing hub' classes were especially focused on the writing of academic essays. Consequently, a number of writing worksheets were prepared to get the students' enrolment in doing the exercises. The writing hub's writing worksheets were constructed to introduce academic vocabulary, mind mapping, and the structure and procedure of writing an academic essay step-by-step. The approach adopted was the process approach to make the class student-centered. Here, each and every student gets a worksheet in each class. To begin with, students are introduced to a good amount of academic vocabulary. With a more extensive vocabulary, the students could create more engaging sentences and steer clear of using the same terms many times throughout the same text. In addition, by learning to employ alternative words and phrases, EFL learners might make their writing more engaging and enjoyable to read.

Although the instructors became active participants, monitors, consultants, and guides as the communicatively learner-centered teaching paradigm takes over. The instructors took the role and responsibilities for the smooth processing of the writing hub session. What was their perception of the effectiveness of the practices, assessed using SPSS in the research?

Findings

i. Students' perception survey results: The quantitative data analysis is done using SPSS to answer students' perceptions of learning practices at Writing Hub to enhance autonomous learning among EFL learners. A 17-item *Likert scale* questionnaire created in Google form was used to gather the data, divided mainly into students' general views about AL and students' perceptions and practices about AL in Writing Hub at EFL writing classes.

Table 1 below shows all five questions that intimate the students' general perceptions regarding the usefulness of AL, the importance of autonomy in language acquisition, the contribution of instructors to student autonomy, and the acceptability and viability of these concepts in current teaching and learning environments.

Statistics

		usefulness of AL in learning context	AL helps or hinders language learning	AL is possible without a teacher's guidance.	In the context of your learning, AL is great.	AL is realistically achievable in your learning context
N	Valid	77	77	77	77	77
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0

Table: 1

In response to the statement that "the AL is effective in learning concepts" (53 students out of 77) The usefulness of the AL in the learning setting was rated favorably by 68.8% of students (figure 1), and (52 students out of 77) The majority of the students, or 67.5%, agreed that it is very useful for learning English as a foreign language (EFL) (figure 2). However, while 41.6% of EFL students chose that learner autonomy can be attained without an instructor's intervention, 29.9% of EFL students accepted the instructor's varied operational tasks in an EFL classroom. The general public was uncertain of this assertion.

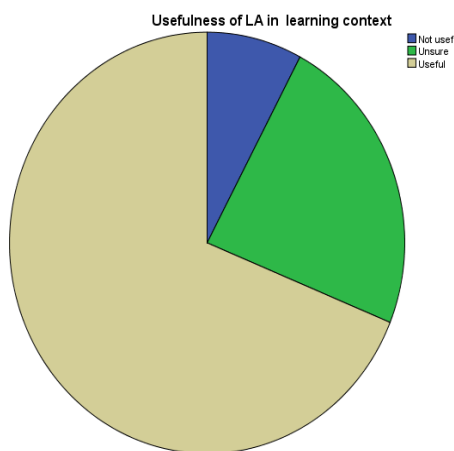


Figure: 1

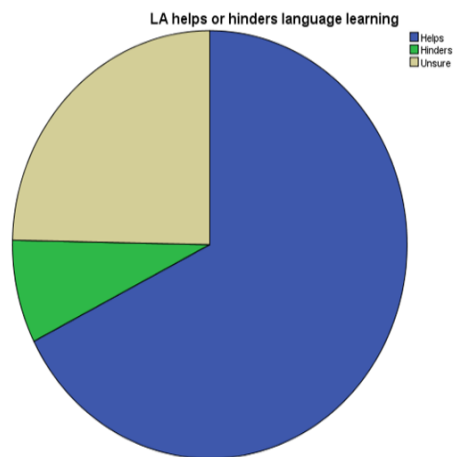


Figure: 2

Responding to what extent promoting learners' autonomy is desirable in their learning contexts, 32.5% of the students favored its desirability and 31.2 found it undesirable, 36.2% of the respondents were not sure about this claim, however. The statement that learners' autonomy is realistically attainable in the current learning context was accepted by 36.8% of respondents. Rests of the students 31.6% are unsure and 31.6% find learners' autonomy unfeasible.

Since the EFL students were introduced to various writing worksheets to enhance writing in an autonomous environment, several questions were asked about their perceptions of everything at the writing hub. To begin with, is it interesting to learn to write autonomously; 37.7% of the students agreed with the statement, while 33.8% disagreed since they felt that the EFL instructor should be fully involved and immersed in the learning process rather than letting the students take on that task themselves (Table 2).

AL is interesting to learn English writing autonomously in class

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	16	20.8	20.8	20.8
	Disagree	7	9.1	9.1	29.9
	Neutral	15	19.5	19.5	49.4
	Strongly agree	13	16.9	16.9	66.2
	Strongly disagree	26	33.8	33.8	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	100.0	

Table: 2

Responding to another question that AL led them to write more effectively and purposefully in academic writing, there is no big difference in the responses. Again, 30% of the students agreed, whereas 31% disagreed with this fact, and 16 % of the students were neutral about this fact.

AL helps me to write different grammatical structures confidently

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	22	28.6	28.6	28.6
	Disagree	6	7.8	7.8	36.4
	Neutral	11	14.3	14.3	50.6
	Strongly agree	15	19.5	19.5	70.1
	Strongly disagree	23	29.9	29.9	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	100.0	

Table: 3

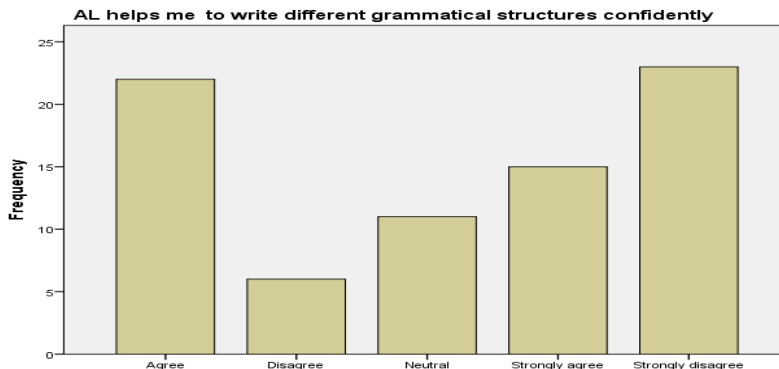


Figure: 3

Since the writing hub is designed only for academic writing practices, it gave EFL learners opportunities to do their writing practices (Table 3). They tried to compose their grammatical structures. Vocabulary knowledge and enhancement were also included in the writing hub practices. They wrote their sentences on the given practice sheets and were corrected and modified by peers and instructors. 37% of the students found AL helpful in writing different grammatical structures confidently in academic writing. Only 29% of the students did not get help due to their utmost weakness in English.

I set my own goals to learn English vocabulary and phrases to help me in writing

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Agree	21	27.3	27.3	27.3
Disagree	8	10.4	10.4	37.7
Neutral	12	15.6	15.6	53.2
Strongly agree	15	19.5	19.5	72.7
Strongly disagree	21	27.3	27.3	100.0
Total	77	100.0	100.0	

Table: 4

Setting their goals of learning academic vocabulary and phrases gave more opportunities for ELF learners to write academic text. Out of 77, 36 students agreed with this fact. Like this, 31 students favored the statement that AL provided the students with more opportunities for English writing in non-native writing hub classes. In terms of motivation (Table 4), EFL learners found it highly effective in facilitating academic writing. A good number of students, 45 out of 77, agreed with this statement. That is good enough; only 12 students disagreed with this statement.

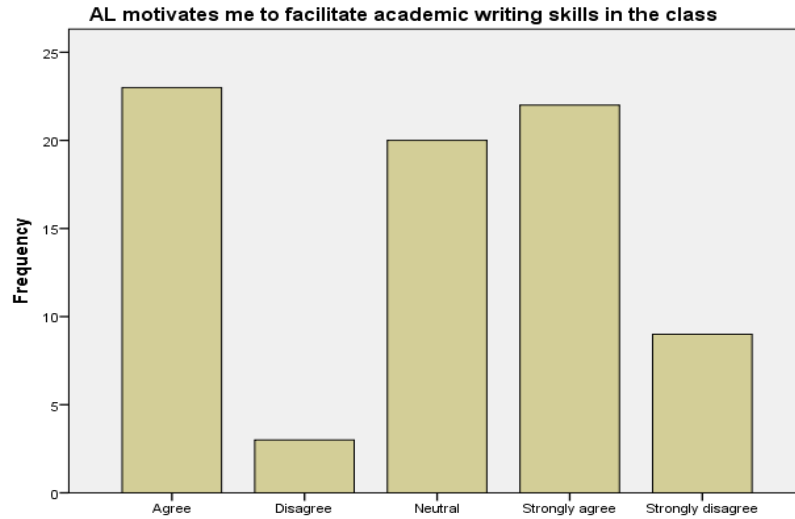


Figure: 4

From exam point of view, the customized techniques helped the EFL learners in getting better score, the Likert scale survey reported its almost 50-50 results. 31 disagreed and 30 students agreed to this statement. However, most of the students liked AL in expending their learning and studying, at writing. Figure: 5 shows the difference between the answers of the students.

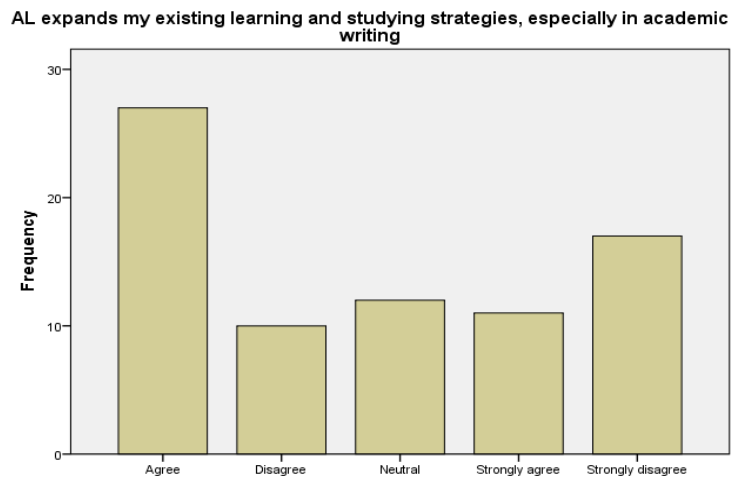


Figure: 5

In learning strategies and increasing EFL learners' self-confidence, EFL learners strongly agreed with the statement, 52% of students found AL to enhance their self-confidence, and only 31.2% disagreed. Conversely, only 13% of students are neutral about this statement.

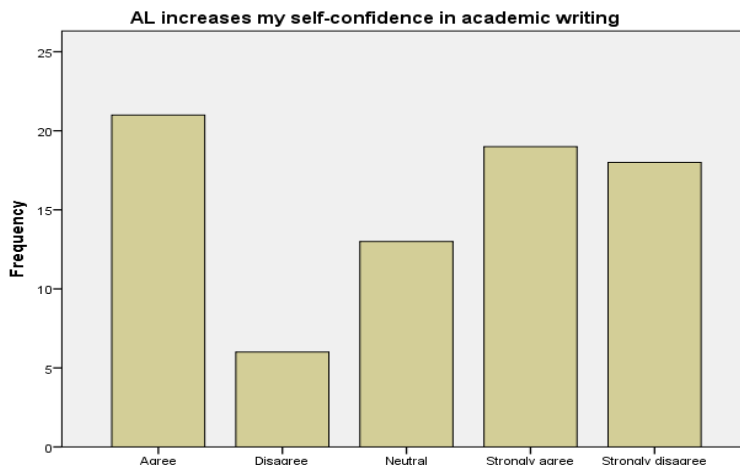


Figure: 6

Figure 7 describes how students could improve academic tasks using the process approach. Out of 77 students, 38 agreed with the statement that AL teaches them to use the process approach to write an academic task by their own. However, the frequency of neutral responses was only 11 and 28 disagreed with the statement. Using the process approach gave students an insight into their strengths and weaknesses, and it developed their habits for writing academic tasks by themselves. 52% of the EFL learners agreed, while 42.9% disagreed with the statement. Half of the population (50.7%) found it helpful to get peer feedback to support, improve, and enhance the writing in the writing hub.

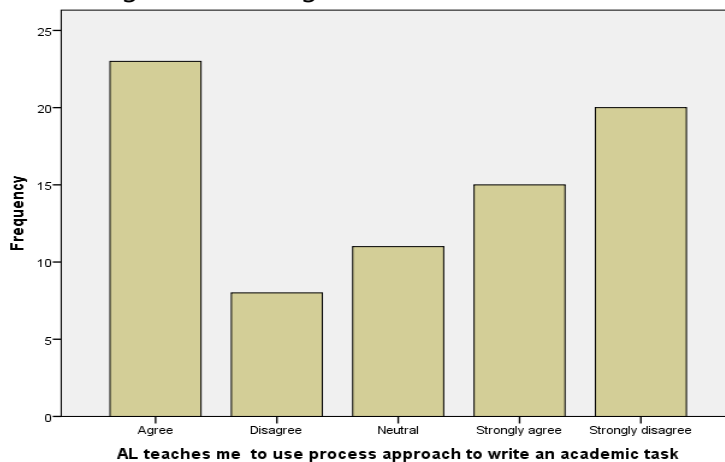


Figure: 7

ii. Teachers’ perceptions survey results: To answer the second research regarding instructor's perceptions and practices in relation to the effectiveness of the AL at writing hub, the analysis includes descriptive statistics and exploratory factor analysis using 1 to 5-point rating linear scale from very ineffective to very effective. However, question 1 to five to 5 describes general views about AL in teaching context. Responding to the usefulness of AL in teaching context (Figure:8), all participants (100%) agreed to the statement and alike it all agreed to the statement that learners’ autonomy helps EFL learner in learning English as a language (Figure 9).

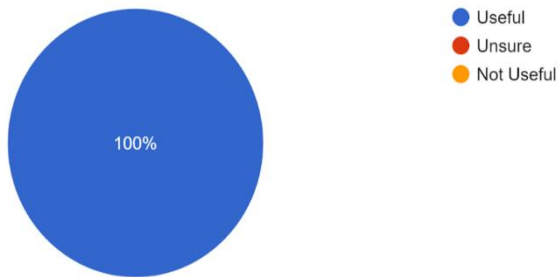


Figure: 8

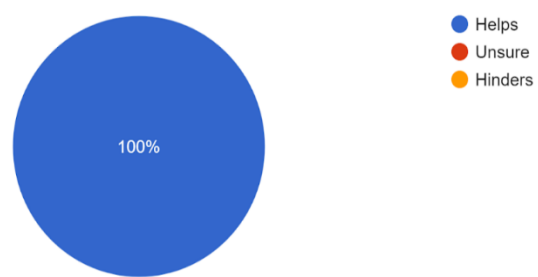


Figure: 9

In the general view section, 50% of the instructors thought that learners’ autonomy could not be achieved without the help of the instructor (Figure: 10). Responding to another question about whether encouraging learner autonomy is desirable in a teaching context or not, 87% of respondents found it desirable. In comparison, only 12.5% replied that it was undesirable in the teaching context. Nevertheless, when answering this question of whether developing learner autonomy is realistically achievable in their teaching context or not, 50% of the responses were unsure, while 37.5% favored this statement.

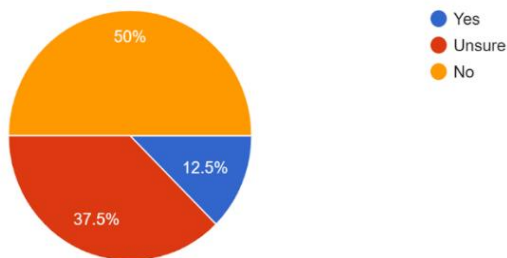


Figure: 10

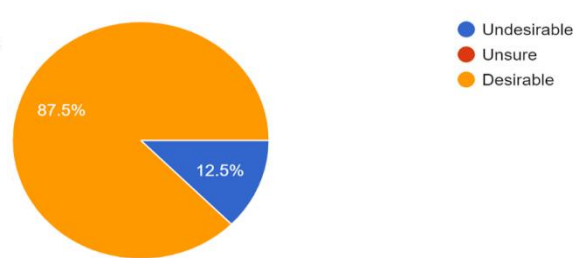


Figure: 11

The effectiveness of instructional strategies for promoting learner autonomy in the writing hub is assessed as we go on to the second component of the instructors' questionnaire. This makes it possible to implement several teacher-led activities and instructional techniques that support the development of learner autonomy in the English writing classroom. How much do the teachers believe that these methods foster student autonomy in Applied College? Instructor’s opinions in college contexts are statistically analyzed considering from very ineffective to very effective scale. In responding to the first statement about using the process approach in developing AL at the writing hub, 62.5% of the respondents found the practices very effective in enhancing AL among EFL learners.

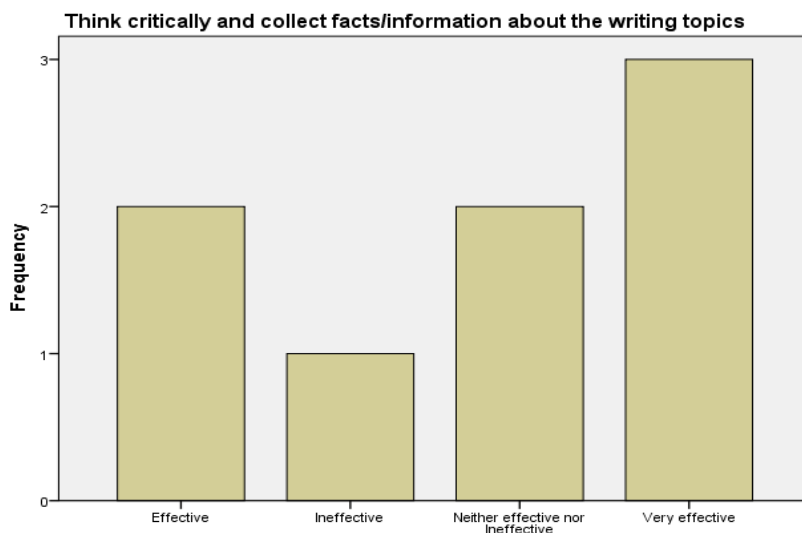


Figure:12

Table 5 explained that getting to know preparing mind map under process approach proved really effective that 87%of the respondents agreed with this statement.

Prepare a mind map before they write in practice worksheets

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Effective	2	25.0	25.0	25.0
	Very effective	5	62.5	62.5	87.5
	Very ineffective	1	12.5	12.5	100.0
Total		8	100.0	100.0	

Table: 5

The process approach supported students in creating an effective structure by following guided writing hub practices in writing classes. 37% of respondents found it very effective, and it was effective for 50% of the respondents. Only 12% of respondents found it ineffective. The use of vocabulary practices to enhance the vocabulary size of the EFL learners proved beneficial. They resulted in these learners' ability to observe and learn academic vocabulary and get help writing in English. For 50% of the respondents, this learning strategy became remarkably effective, and 37% found it compelling. The process approach further motivates EFL learners to write a lot of structured texts using academic vocabulary. However, only 50% of respondents thought it was worthwhile to examine the sentences and structures in order to create their own language rule.

In second part of the questionnaire, students' independent practices at writing hub to develop autonomous learning in classroom were explored. The instructor's motivation towards utilizing the reading skills (skim & scan the text) for critical thinking came up with mixed results. Only 50% of the respondents found the statement compelling, while 37% were neutral. In addition, 12% of the respondents found it completely ineffective to scan and skim the text in the book and get help writing the essay.

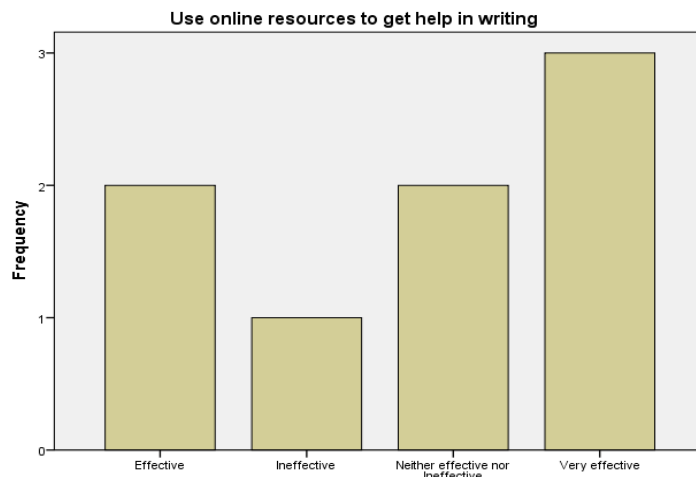


Figure: 13

At writing hub classes, instructors' attempts to inspire EFL learners to use online resources to get help with writing showed positive results. For example, 62% of the respondents found it very effective to write an academic essay alone. Scaffolding of peers in the classroom was also a part of enhancing autonomous learning. Instructors assigned writing tasks that could be practiced and improved by peer feedback. 87% of the respondents found it very effective, while only 12.5% found it ineffective in learning and composing writing with peers' help (Table 7).

Assign writing tasks that can be practiced and improved by peer feedback in the classroom

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Effective	4	50.0	50.0	50.0
Ineffective	1	12.5	12.5	62.5
Very effective	3	37.5	37.5	100.0
Total	8	100.0	100.0	

Table: 6

Not only peer feedback but also allowing students to work independently in and outside the classroom with the help of writing hub exercises gave a positive outcome. 75% of the respondents found it very effective in inculcating the autonomy among students. Asking students to monitor and motivate themselves by recognizing their strengths, weaknesses and needs for improvement in writing boosted autonomy among EFL students.

Section three in the questionnaire, evaluated teacher's role in developing autonomous learning at writing hub practices. Selecting writing worksheets or activities relevant to the students' writing needs and goals, 65% of the respondents found it effective, while 25% considered it neither effective nor ineffective. Instructors' role of keeping a record of EFL earners' writing worksheets to practice learning at home is also proved constructive and 75% of the instructors found it effective. By becoming active and participating in writing practices by selecting

their materials and methods in the classroom proved productive and profitable to the students. The same no. of respondents answered positively. Instructors' role of stimulus and motivation to compose a structured essay using transition words in their writing is favored by 62.5 % of the respondents. While 75% of respondents preferred to advise students to use dictionaries and reference materials to acquire academic vocabulary for writing.

Instruct students to use reference books and dictionaries to gain academic vocabulary for writing

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Effective	3	37.5	37.5	37.5
	Ineffective	1	12.5	12.5	50.0
	Neither effective nor Ineffective	1	12.5	12.5	62.5
	Very effective	3	37.5	37.5	100.0
	Total	8	100.0	100.0	

Table: 7

iii. Answering third research question that to what extent the importance of autonomous learning is noticeable in EFL writing classrooms, a *t-test* is done comparing the writing results of the students. Two tests (writing essay) marks from three sections at level 2 were collected and compared through *t-test*.

First, a normality test was conducted by inserting the data of two test marks (mid and final). The null hypothesis is $p < 0.05$. The values are sampled from a population that follows a normal distribution. A large number of samples ($n=131$) show too much power for the normality test. In the given table, the test shows a significant departure from normality, $W(131) = 0.96$, $p=0.02$. It is presumed that the data are regularly distributed because the p -value is greater than the null hypothesis ($p < 0.05$). The null hypothesis is disproved by $p=0.02$.

Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Difference	.112	131	.000	.966	131	.002

Table: 8

The findings of paired sample *t-test*'s descriptive analysis are given here.

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Mid exam(Writing marks)	3.57	131	3.328	.291
	Final exam(Writing marks)	4.98	131	2.793	.244

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences			
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	The difference is within a 95% confidence interval.
					Lower
Pair 1	Mid exam(Writing marks) - Final exam(Writing marks)	-1.401	2.923	.255	-1.906

Table: 9

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences			
		The difference is within a 95% confidence interval.			
		Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Mid exam(Writing marks) - Final exam(Writing marks)	- .895	- 5.485	130	.000

Table: 10

Figures 14 and 15 present graphical test procedures to demonstrate the normality of the data. There is a difference between the mean of both the tests shown in both graphs. Figure 15 graphically shows (mid marks final) shows the normal curve. It shows that the data is strongly normal and optimal to support the study. The difference in mean for both tests is 3.57 and 4.98 for mid-results and final results.

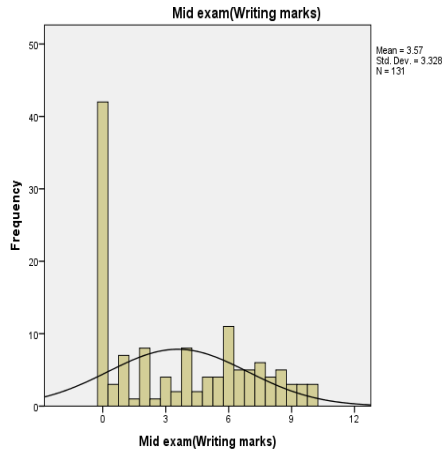


Figure: 14

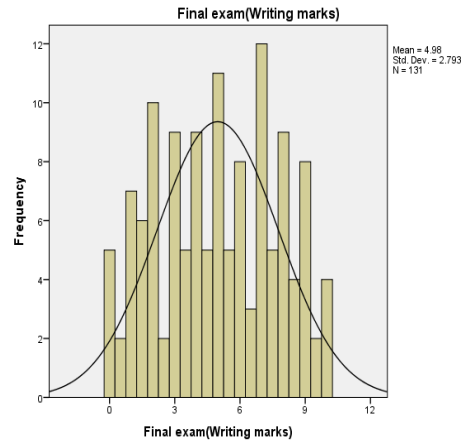


Figure: 15

Discussion

The overall results esteem and support autonomous learning in the present teaching and learning scenario in the university. However, on the other hand, the student survey proved and accepted the research done by Khulaifiyah et al. (2021) that learner autonomy necessitates the modernization of learning environments, inclusive classrooms, and strategies for the effectiveness of students' learning by incorporating classroom lessons from students' experiences and encouraging genuine reflection as they learn new information. Although the statistics show the usefulness and efficacy of a new writing hub that was learner-centered, full of new techniques, and cooperative with learners to enhance writing. The EFL students were determining the desirability of the LA in the classroom. On the other hand, it indicated that the concept and notion of autonomy could not have been more apparent to the learners. It is similar to Buenner's (2019) study, where the students did not certainly know the concepts of autonomy well. However, some good populations said yes to the realistically achievable AL in EFL contexts. The outcome was analogous to earlier research by Alrabai (2021), where learner autonomy was mediated by teacher-supportive instruction and motivation.

Since the learners became more self-reliant and dependent on themselves, they could compose writing more effectively and purposefully using the LA (learner autonomy) approach. The guided structures and scrambled or substituted sentences give enough sentence structures to learners. According to Little's argument, the study supports the students' efforts to be more efficient and effective in the EFL classroom. The writing hub concepts assisted learners in understanding their role as participants in AL approaches.

The participation and involvement in doing the writing hub activities increased and resulted in positive outcomes in writing assignments and to write in the exam. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation remained the boosting tool to facilitate and expedite the writing in writing hub.

The customized techniques introduced and instructed a mind map, choosing

ideas/keywords, introducing techniques, choosing examples and definitions to expand the main body, and how to conclude the essay. These expanded the learners' previous knowledge and enhanced their writing skills. In the study, the process-oriented approach adopted at writing hub activities instilled confidence in the students and unquestionably motivated them to write an academic piece. The majority of respondents strongly agree with this statement. In addition, peer feedback and teacher-guided strategies and approaches supported, reinforced, and strengthened their writing capability at the writing hub.

In the modern learning and teaching environment, the entire involvement and guidance of the instructors who originated and developed AL is desirable. Not only learners but even instructors were uncertain about the learners' ability to acquire autonomy in practice.

However, when it comes to the effectiveness of the practices and performances embraced at Writing hub, they were undoubtedly very effective, operative, and actual. The different approaches in AL were realistic, lifelike, and modernized. They scrutinized and explored the deficiencies and needs of the learners at the preparatory level. Most respondents preferred to deliberate and construct a mind map before writing the essay, since it was fruitful for synthesizing and producing the information. Moreover, getting learners to mug up mind mapping before writing was declared highly effective. Since it was channeled, stored vocabulary, and significant to the topic of the essay.

The process-oriented approach motivated the learners to create many structures while writing the essay. Nevertheless, the peer feedback and instructors' intervention made the practices commendable. The Writing hub practices were not only restricted to learning vocabulary but also exploited, interconnected, and associated reading skills and critical thinking in writing. Technology-based approaches also gave an opportunity and occasion to work independently and autonomously. All these modernized and technology-mediated instructions and directives proved very effective in getting assistance from online sources, websites, and e-books. Learner autonomy is enhanced and enriched with the enrolment of other learners. The frankness of witnessing and observing among peers showed less hesitation and unwillingness and boosted perfection in doing work independently.

The study showed the instructors' different roles in guiding, mentoring, deciding, making records, and choosing appropriate writing worksheets for Writing hub classes. Reference books and dictionaries also helped learners be self-reliant and self-dependent in writing classes. Moreover, students' results proved that practicing all above gave a significant push in commanding academic writing and improving their grades on the final exam.

Conclusion

The study provided an overall scenario of applying 'Writing Hub' practices to infuse autonomy among the students, and the results showed partial success in fulfilling its aim. During one semester's intervention, all practice exercises proved highly helpful to the students in coping with

primary and fundamental writing issues. However, learners' autonomy needs to be clarified to the students to make sure and limit the learners' roles. The involvements of learners must be clarified, and students must be given some introductory training and lessons to inform and decide their role in autonomous settings. Before applying autonomy in the EFL classrooms, new planning, specific rules, and rubrics should be made. Learners' autonomy may be enhanced by using different student-centered, technology-mediated, and resource-based approaches to meet future circumstances. In the future, more approaches can be applied to enhance and boost writing domain autonomy among learners.

Declaration of Conflicts of Interests:

The authors reported no potential conflict of interest

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