Self-Monitoring, and Writing Proficiency of Academic EFL Students: Developing Learner Autonomy in Student Writing- *A case study conducted at Faculty of Education, University of Misurata, Libya*

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Abstract:

Thomson (1996) claims that we are born self-directed learners. Each one knows how to take charge and be in control of learning. Regarding writing, the self-monitoring (SM) technique is designed to help students apply that critical ability to their written compositions by giving learners control over the feedback they receive. Students read their writing and examine it critically, finding and correcting their own mistakes to enable teachers to provide effective feedback. Therefore, this study presents this technique as a valuable way of increasing autonomy in learning writing skills and improving writing proficiency. The focus of the study is to investigate if upper-intermediate and advanced students at University- can effectively use the SM technique and improve their writing. The results were quite different from the claim that learners can be trained to use SM in their writing effectively. The participants showed overwhelmingly unimpressive insights towards using SM, and that was due to the short-term training on how to use annotations efficiently in their compositions.

Key words: Self-monitoring (SM), Feedback, Writing, learner autonomy, EFL students.

العلاقة بين تقنية المراقبة الذاتية وكفاءة الكتابة الأكاديمية لطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية: تطوير مسؤولية المتعلم أثناء الكتابة

(دراسة حالة أجريت في كلية التربية - جامعة مصراتة)

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الملخص:

يدّعي طومسون (1996) أننا ولدنا متعلمين موجَّهين ذاتيا. كل فرد يعرف كيف يتولى المسؤولية والتحكم في التعلم الخاص به. فيما يتعلق بالكتابة، تم تصميم تقنية المراقبة الذاتية لمساعدة الطلاب على تطبيق تلك التقنية الفعّالة على ملاحظاتهم التوضيحية المكتوبة من خلال منحهم التحكم في التعليقات التي يتلقونها من معلِّميهم. يقوم الطلاب بقراءة كتاباتهم وفحصها بشكل نقدي والعثور على أخطائهم لتمكين المعلِّمين من تقديم ردود فعل إيجابية ومن ثم تصحيحها.

الدراسة الحالية تعرض هذه التقنية كطريقةٍ قيمةٍ لزيادة الاستقلالية في تعلم وتحسين إتقان مهارة الكتابة. كان محور الدراسة هو التحقق ما إذا كان طلاب تخصص اللغة الإنجليزية ذو المستوى فوق المتوسط والمتقدم الدارسين بكلية التربية – جامعة مصراتة، يمكنهم استخدام تقنية المراقبة الذاتية بشكل فعّال ومن ثُم تحسين كفاءة كتاباتهم. كانت النتائج في الواقع مختلفة تمامًا عن الادعاء القائل بأنه يمكن تدريب المتعلِّمين حقًا على استخدام تقنية المراقبة الذاتية في كتاباتهم بشكل فعّال. أظهر المشاركون في الدراسة رؤى غير مبهرة إلى حد كبير تجاه استخدام التعليقات أو الملاحظات التوضيحية بكفاءة في كتاباتهم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تقنية المراقبة الذاتية، تعليقات المعلم، الكتابة، استقلالية المتعلم، متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

1. Introduction to the Study Topic:

Esch (1996) argues that there are misconceptions associated with the notion that everyone knows how to take charge and be in control of his/her learning. Firstly, many have taken Thomson's claim as referring to self-instruction or learning in the absence of a teacher. This is not necessarily the case and does not mean that the intervention of a teacher is banned. Encouraging independent learning is not something teachers do to learners. the self-directed or autonomous learner has the critical ability to reflect on his/her own experience and to take charge of monitoring, evaluating and taking responsibility for their learning. progress and achievements with the teacher's support (Esch, 1996).

Many years ago, the researcher was a full-time student at Nottingham Trent University (UK). Shortly, British students of upper-intermediate and advanced levels were required to be autonomous learners, although many language classrooms failed to encourage this. The learners must reflect on their learning, identify areas of weakness in their skills, and begin a process of assessing and re-assessing throughout the journey of the academic study. Many international students of higher education in Britain brought cultural expectations from their own countries where teacher-centred classrooms are the norm - in Indonesia, it is common to have feedback given by teachers that "teachers are the people who are educated to teach and correct their students' assignments while students are people who have to receive the corrections and obey every instruction from their teachers" (Susanti, 2013, pp. 1-2). Here, I would say that I was one of those students. I came from an Arabic context –Libya- where teacher-centered classrooms were and quite still the norm; no experience reflecting on our learning or experimenting with strategies to find out what suits us best. I strongly agree with Smith (2001) when he describes the Arabic education system as teacher-centred and that students receive information passively.

This study therefore intends to experience the academic education culture to cultivate the concept of learner's ability to self-direct learning or autonomy into my English major students of academic writing courses at the Faculty of Education- Misurata University. Recently there has been an attempt to change the plan from teacher-centered learning to student-centered learning.

Particularly, this study focuses on writing which most researchers consider as one of the most important skills that learners are expected to master for academic success (Wang, 2008). Raims (1983) states that what writers need, more than anything else is to develop their ability to read their writing and to examine it critically to learn how to improve it. Research shows that learners' writing remains weak if there is too much teacher correction and if there is insufficient feedback (Rocio, 2012).

1.1 Students involved in the study.

The study includes a group of *48* out of *63* (*39* females & *9* males) upper-intermediate English major students in the fourth semester attending an academic writing course in the Fall Semester (2023) at the Faculty of Education. The participants are all volunteers and therefore no attempt is made to select them systematically and no proficiency tests is administered. They all come from similar Libyan ethnic backgrounds with ages ranging from 19- 20 years old.

1.2 Research Questions and Hypotheses.

Q1: Does self-monitoring technique in writing work for all English major students at the faculty of education? Can all English major students effectively use the SM in writing?

Q2: How self-monitoring may affect English major students' skills in writing at the faculty of education? Does SM improve English major students' writing?

Q3: What are English major students' attitudes towards using the SM in writing?

These questions will be examined in the study. However, some potential problems of using SM might be raised; firstly, students may not have developed the ability to articulate their concerns; secondly, they may choose to focus overwhelmingly on language, at the expense of the careful reviewing of content and organization that makes compositions effective. To deal with these problems, a 5-week programme of three -stages training may be expected to be provided, which involves (a) raising awareness of the SM, (b) demonstrating annotations, and the researcher, who acted as a teacher trains the students on how to use SM; explaining with examples when and how students should do their annotations informing them about several aspects that they could work on: generic structure, punctuation, spelling, vocabulary, and grammar. (c) evaluating annotations. It is expected that this programme will be effective in improving the students' self-monitoring and their ability to articulate and describe their concerns through their compositions.

1.3 Significance of the Research.

Research in the use of Self-monitoring techniques is new and still lacking. Having many studies at various levels, and within a long time, is necessary to confirm the findings in this research, so that a clearer and more comprehensive picture can be revealed, especially on how to use self-monitoring in writing, as it engages teachers and students in a dialogue through writing even in circumstances where individual face-to-face meetings are not possible. And as Michael Donaghy (cited in Rocio, 2012) says 'everything is negotiable' and students must do a lot of negotiating by using annotations if they want their

writing to be successful, and if they want to develop independence and responsibility in their writing too.

1.4 Outline of the research.

This research study involves action research and qualitative tools such as diary-keeping and a focus group.

1- The participants were first trained on how to use self-monitoring by giving them a brief introduction to SM in writing before they were asked to apply this technique in their writing. This outlined what self-monitoring(SM) in writing is, what the benefits of SM and what the SM strategies are with some examples explaining when and how students should do their annotations. This training lasted 90 minutes out of class time.

2- Students were then asked to write annotations on their first draft of the study course essay which was later submitted. Alongside this, the participants were required to write their 1st diary entry, using the guidelines provided (see appendix1). This first entry was to focus on the use of the SM technique; whether they found it easy or difficult and whether they paid adequate attention to global aspects such as content, organization, and transitions, as well as the local ones such as grammar, and vocabulary.

3- Having received feedback on the 1st drafts, the participants were asked to write their 2nd diary entry using the directive guide diary 2 (see appendix 3), this time on whether they found the feedback on their annotations satisfactory, and whether this process helped with the writing of their 2nd drafts.

4- Near the end of the study course, the final drafts of the essay were to be submitted. After a week, a focus group (see appendix 4) was conducted to investigate the students' views and attitudes towards the SM technique, as well as to reveal the improvement in their writings and to find if the technique works for all students.

1.5 Research Issues and the area of the study.

The literature review on the development of autonomy in writing skills showed that the process of writing is considered to have a critical role in language acquisition and has a very positive effect on developing student autonomy (Ramirez Balderas, 2018). A wide range of studies were conducted to explore student autonomy in writing skills in English language learning (Cresswell 2000; Hyland & Hyland 2006; Suzuki 2009; Zaru et al., 2014; Cahyono & Amrina, 2016; Aghayani, B. 2020; Aldukhail, 2023).

According to Cresswell (2000), autonomy in the learning of writing can be increased through the self-monitoring technique that was first proposed by Charles (1990) and leads EFL / ESL writing instruction into a new promising stage. This is in line with the process approach to writing that is also

characterized by the students being the first person to check and be aware of their writing process and if possible, make corrections for the mistakes (Shih, as stated in Brown, 2001). The value of responsibility is also what is supported in the learner autonomy. Dickinson as cited in Akmilia, et al., (2017) pointed out that taking control of feedback allows learners to gain important items in the context so that they can have either an informed correction or positive feedback to support the acquisition and set up the items in their productive inventory.

   Hughes (2003) suggests many pieces of advice for self-monitoring or self-editing, the most important of which are:
  1- Read your editorial aloud: Reading aloud helps the self-editor to spot flows, errors, holes in logic, word problems, missing words, wrong homonyms, misspellings, grammatical errors, and confusing words.
  2- Use spelling checker programs: Use such programs but do not depend on them. They do not tell you whether the used word is the right word or not; they just make sure of the word's spelling.
  3- Make a printout: Print your editorial and revise it with a pencil.
   - *Related Studies.*
   Akmilia et al., (2017) investigated the application of self-directed feedback in a writing classroom in terms of how it may affect their skills in writing and the student's response to it. The study was conducted in one of the public high schools in Bandung, taking nine students from a science class as the participants. It employs a case study which uses interview and document analysis as the data collection techniques. The findings show that students had progressed in their writing skills in terms of organization, vocabulary, mechanics, and grammar. Most of the students saw self-directed feedback as a worthy technique to be used again in the subsequent lessons. The study concluded that self-directed feedback is proven applicable in writing classrooms as it functions as a step in making students acquire strategies of learning autonomy.

   Vorgelegt et al., (2020) presented two studies in this thesis that tested how the acquisition of academic writing skills and the improvement of text quality can be supported. To this aim, the combination of applying cognitive and metacognitive writing activities was tested. *Study 1 tested* whether undergraduates and postgraduates can be effectively supported in the acquisition of academic writing skills by training one cognitive writing strategy (i.e., text structure application strategy) in combination with one metacognitive writing strategy (i.e., self-monitoring strategy). *Study 2* tested the effect of training on cognitive writing strategy on the acquisition of academic writing skills. Both studies aimed to investigate whether inducing metacognitive writing activities in combination with training cognitive writing strategies fosters the

acquisition of academic writing skills and the improvement of text quality. The results revealed that undergraduates and postgraduates who received the additional self-monitoring strategy training benefited significantly more in terms of the acquisition of academic writing skills and the quality of their texts than learners who did not receive this intervention. The results of the recent study suggested a combination of training cognitive and metacognitive writing strategies or providing feedback that is aligned with writing experience to improve the text quality of beginning academic writers.

Regarding the Arabic context, a study conducted by Aldukhail (2023) examines female Saudi undergraduate students' perceptions of applying self-directed feedback in writing and their preferred method of feedback. Study participants were 94 and it employed a mixed methodology approach, in which qualitative and quantitative tools were used to collect students' perceptions. The data was collected via a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed that most students held positive perceptions towards self-directed feedback in writing based on a guideline sheet. However, the study results also showed that teacher feedback was the better method of giving feedback than self-directed feedback, while peer feedback was the least preferred method. Some applications were suggested as instructors should provide students with guideline sheets in writing classes to increase their motivation and confidence and encourage them to work independently in writing classes to improve their academic performance, increase students' awareness of their limitations and their ability to handle them and prepare them for lifelong learning.

2. Study Methods, Data Analysis and Findings:

Three cycles of the *action research* process by Zuber-Skeritt (1992) were adapted and modified to be used in the present study. It consists of four essential elements (planning – action- observation-reflecting). See Figure 1.
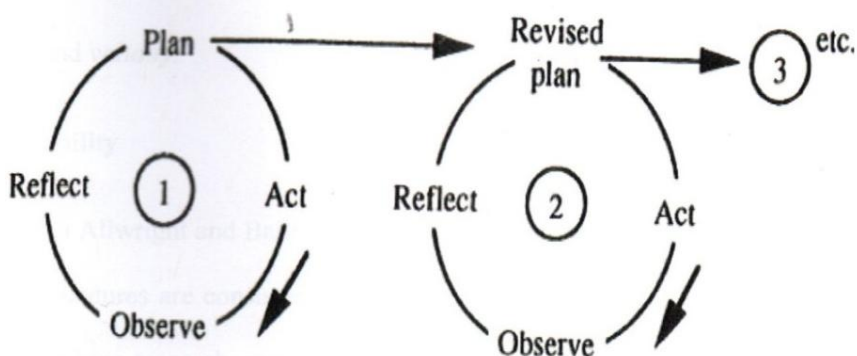

Figure 1: Action Research Cycle Adopted from Zuber- Skerritt, 1992: 13

In each cycle, the observation phase will provide the findings of the study. Hence there will be three sets of findings. The findings of cycles 2 & 3, data will be analyzed by using tables to summarize annotations and feedback. Also, examples of diary entries and participants' drafts will be included.

2.1 The researcher's role in Action research.

The researcher's role in action research is acting briefly as "the teacher as researcher" or "reflective practitioner" (Zuber-Skerritt, 1997). In this study, the term "the teacher as researcher" is adapted since the researcher is herself acting as a teacher of annotations to the participants researching SM in the literature, collecting and analyzing findings.

2.2 Action Research for Data Collection:

Three action research cycles were carried out. Below is a full description of each one.

Cycle 1

The teacher as the researcher planned, acted, observed and reflected in order to find out what participants knew about SM and then decide what action to take.

a- *Plan phase:* to start, primary information was needed about the participants' background and detailed information about their experience of using SM in writing such as what they understood by the term SM, whether they had used this technique or doing annotations in writing before or not and what the difficulties are of making annotations in their writing.

b- *Action phase:* the participants were met in their classroom and were asked about their background and experience of using the SM in writing.

c- *Observation phase (Findings):* as a result, it was realized that neither of the participants nor their teachers had ever used the technique in their writings before. Therefore, it was necessary to raise their awareness of the technique and to train them on how to use annotations in their writing.

d- *Reflection phase:* new difficulties then were raised such as how the researcher could help the participants understand the SM technique and use annotations in their writing. Another problem also was raised such as how much attention the average student may pay to global aspects of writing rather than simply to the language aspects. Besides, what appropriate method(s) would be used to collect data for my research purposes? This suggested a new action for the 2nd cycle.

Cycle 2

a- *Plan phase***:** a plan was devised to overcome the fact that participants were not familiar with SM. The researcher decided to teach annotations for *90 minutes* out of their regular classes' time and to collect data using *diary-*

*keeping1*which reveals if they found it easy or difficult to use SM annotations and the reasons behind that.

b- *Action phase:* during this phase, the teaching and procedures selected for collecting data are developed and put into action.

- *Teaching SM annotations.*

The use of annotations was introduced by giving a brief introduction to the SM technique in writing which consists of writing annotations, and its advantages that can be gained for students in terms of solving writing problems and aiding written language development, besides the given examples. Then, different types of SM annotations and their purposes were discussed, in order to draw students' attention to language and global features and how comprehensive annotations are made. This introduction lasted *90* minutes and took place outside of their regular class time.

- *Self-monitoring (SM) practice.*

The students were not allowed to practice or do their annotations outside of the regular classes of the course as they were studying on an intensive semester, which had deadlines for work and a high degree of pressure they were so busy with exams and timed writing, and they were also not happy to do any extra work. Unfortunately, time was against them.

- *Annotate the 1st draft of the course essay.*

Therefore, it was decided to work on the participants' essays which were one of the elements of the assessment timetable of the academic writing course (table 1 provides a profile of the essay type). All the participants were then asked to write their SM annotations, to underline and number their areas of concern on the 1st drafts of their essay. Moreover, it was very motivating when the participants were informed that their 1st drafts would be corrected and returned with feedback on the SM annotations.

Table (1): The Essay Title

Define ecotourism. Compare and contrast two approaches to ecotourism. Select two case study examples that reflect these different approaches and critically. conclude by stating the lessons that can be learned for future projects.
✓ *Write the first draft of the essay using the plan that you have created.* ✓ *You're not required to produce a bibliography for this draft.*

- *Diary 1.*

The participants were also invited to keep their *first diaries* while writing the 1st draft of the essay to elicit their feelings towards the use of the SM annotations in writing, i.e., whether they were able to express their intentions easily, and what areas they paid most attention to (appendix 2 provides samples of a participants' diary 1). Since what the teacher as a researcher wishes to

monitor might not be noted by the diary writer (Allwright & Bailey, 1994), participants were given a guide of a series of structured prompts to complete the diary and they were advised that this was for guidance only and that they were free to complete. An example of *a diary directive 1* appears in Appendix 1.

c- Observation phase (Findings and Data Analysis)**.**

- *Annotations on the 1st draft of the essay.*

The first drafts of the participants' essays were examined and analyzed; firstly, to check that annotations had been made, then to assess clarity of meaning, how easy participants found it to write annotations, and how much attention was paid to global aspects (content, organization) as well as language aspects (grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation).

All the information gathered analyzed and transcribed into a table to be comprised. It was observed that in general, the participants used SM in their writing. However, the majority (75%) of the participants were not able to effectively use annotations in their writing (see Table 2).

Table (2): Effective and Ineffective Annotations Made by Participants in the 1st Draft

Effective annotations	Ineffective annotations
Number of participants: 36/48 > 75%	12/48> 25%

The students' annotations were unspecific and unfocused, and the meaning was often unclear, and more general than it would have liked. It was considered that these participants used the annotations to transfer responsibility for applying reviewing principles to the teacher. This could be obtained from the following excepts from participants' annotations:

Participant 1

'I think the words used in the essay are not good somewhere. Should they be revised?'

Participant 2

'I am always worried about my writing tenses, particularly in this essay I had to use both present and past tenses. I don't think I have used the right tenses in most of the areas of my essay'

Participant 3

'Is it necessary to provide an example here'.

Participant 4

'Is there anything which is irrelevant or is not well-balanced to the essay question'

Participant 5

'I think my conclusion about ecotourism was not good. Should it be revised?'

However, the remaining 25% were able to express themselves enough to enable the teacher as the researcher to know about the problem(s). they

encountered in their writing. This can be shown through the following two annotations:

Participant 6

' when I came to start writing this essay, my problem was how to start. would you please suggest useful opening sentences?'

Participant 7

'I have written different definitions for ecotourism, and each was different from the other. I have written about the similarities only. Do you think it is better to mention the differences too?'

Though in other places, these participants failed to express the intentions they had, however, they were able to indicate problems, which provided valuable information to the teacher. For example, one annotated that *'this essay will define… which is based on… important element. To compare, approaches of… are to be explored. (I think the use of are to be is not appropriate.* Although the use of 'are to' in fact was, correct, the participant's SM annotation indicated that s/he thought it was wrong. Thus, it was clear that s/he was uncertain about the use of this type of *'auxiliary+ infinitive'* therefore, appropriate feedback could then be provided.

In other words, it could be said that 25% of the participants compared with 75% were able to think over their problems and provide more annotations.

Although it was not the main focus of the study, it was interesting to classify the annotations according to their concern. The annotations were graded analytically into *five* aspects: content, organization, translation, vocabulary, and grammar including spelling, tense and punctuation, which respectively accounted for nearly 45%,10%, 10%, 15%, and 20%.

- *Diary 1.*

The purpose of analyzing this section is to examine and find out the reasons behind the participants' misuse of the SM technique. For instance, to discover why they did not manage to use annotations effectively in their writing, what problems they found when using the technique, and the reasons behind their attention to content and grammar. All the information was reviewed and analyzed onto a clear table according to the directive guide diary (1) prompts, (see appendix 1). The results of Diary 1 are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Analysis of Directive Guide Diary 1 Results

Prompt 1: did you use the self-monitoring technique in your writing?			
' Yes'		'No'	
I used the MS technique in my essay.	>(48/48)	---	>(0/48)
Prompt 2: did you find it easy to express yourself through the annotations on your writing?			
'Yes'		'No'	
It was easy, useful and helpful.	>(13/48)	It was quite difficult	>(35/48)

Prompt 3: what are the areas that you pay most attention to?
    1- Global aspects: content, organization, and transitions.
    2- Language aspects: grammar, and vocabulary.

Global aspects			_Language aspects_		
-Content	18		-Grammar	12	
-Organization	6	>(28/48)			>(20/48)
-Transitions	4		-Vocabulary	8	

Prompt 4: what problems did you find when using self-monitoring in writing?

It was quite difficult to use, in terms of:		No problems	
The low-level of my language proficiency.	*18*		
The hesitation of write intentionally.	*6*		
There was not enough chance to practice or train the technique.	*6*	*(36/48)*	--- *(12/48)*
It was time consuming as we have other responsibilities.	*6*		

    From the above table, it is clear that most of the participants (36/48) found it difficult to use annotations in their writing which resulted in ineffectiveness. This may have occurred because their low level of language proficiency caused

hesitancy in written communication. Other relevant factors that appeared through these analyses were: the lack of time given to practice and train on the SM technique, the lack of flexibility when writing annotations, the lack of time as their essays were written within a limited time and no doubt, tiredness played a part as the participants were studying on an intensive semester, with strict deadlines and a high degree of pressure.

d- Reflection phase: It was used to reflect on study question 1 which is:

Q1: Does *the self-monitoring technique work for all English major students at the faculty of education? Can all English major students effectively use the SM in their writing?*

The data analysis from both the 1st drafts of the essay and diary (1) showed that all the participants used annotations in their essays; however, three-quarters (75%) of them used annotations ineffectively that were unspecific, unclear and too general. The other quarter (25%) used them effectively. Thus, it can be concluded that the short-term training of *90* minutes did not equip participants to articulate themselves through their annotations. Students needed several cycles of the SM before writing their essays.

Based on the results above, a look at the 2nd drafts and the 2nd diaries was needed to see if there were any improvements because of using annotations. As well as, to conduct a focus group to elicit participants' attitudes towards using SM annotations.

Cycle 3

a- Action phase: feedback on the 1st drafts was given, both the 2nd drafts and 2n diaries were collected and the focus group was set up as well. The observation and reflection phases were followed.

- *Feedback on 1st Drafts.*

After the participants completed the task and handed in their 1st drafts, I gave feedback as 'the teacher as researcher' which was mainly on the SM annotations only. The feedback consisted of the correction of all annotations either expected explicitly or inexplicitly, along with explanations. The annotations were also classified into those that were expressed clearly and therefore easy to answer, and those that were less specific and therefore difficult to answer. They were further classified as to the type of annotation itself in terms of global annotation (content, organization, and transitions) or language annotation (grammar, vocabulary) therefore effective feedback was given.

- *Rewriting and 2nd Drafts.*

As has been suggested in the literature review part, students must revise and rewrite their essays based on the feedback provided. Therefore, in order to explore whether the feedback on annotations has an effect in terms of improving

student writing, all the participants were asked to rewrite their essays, considering the feedback they had received on SM annotations.

- *Diary 2.*

The participants were subsequently invited to write their *diaries* again after handing in their final drafts of the essay, to explore and evaluate both their level of satisfaction with the feedback that was given on the SM annotations and whether the use of the SM technique had an effect in improving their writing (appendix 3 provides a sample of a participant's diary 2). In this case, too, participants were given a guide to completing the diary, as well as a diary directive detailing how to record their views. The participants were also given the option of emailing their diaries to *'the teacher as research'*. Examples of this second diary directive appear in Appendix 3.

- *Focus Group.*

Towards the end of the semester particularly after the submission day of the course essay, the participants were invited to attend an informal focus group to discuss their views on the effectiveness of using the SM technique in writing, whether the technique goes with all students and leads to both improvement of writing and a greater level of independence. The focus group was used as a complementary research method based on the diaries, as this would create the opportunity to 'go deeper into the motivation of the respondents and their reasons for responding as they did' (Cohen & Manion, 1994: 273). (An example of a focus group schedule appears in Appendix 4). Furthermore, it needs to be noted that the interview was conducted in and at the same time as the class, as participants had the freedom to express and exchange their feelings and to be as spontaneous as they could.

b- *Observation Phase (Findings and data analysis).*

- *The 2nd Draft of the Essay.*

When the 2nd drafts were handed in, it was observed that they appeared not to be of a better quality. In particular, *18* participants either did not make any changes suggested to them or ignored these suggestions. As a result, some mistakes were repeated and there was not a significant improvement in the 2nd drafts. Some examples of these participants' annotations on the 1st drafts, given feedback and the 2nd drafts are as follows:

Participant's annotation on the 1st draft*: '...is there anything which irrelevant or is not well-balanced to the essay question.*'

Teacher feedback: ' There *is a lot of interesting information in your essay. However, in some areas, you added unnecessary information which is irrelevant to the essay question. e.g., on page 5 of your 1st draft, you gave detailed definitions for each criterion of ecotourism which were irrelevant to the essay*

question. Therefore, you have better cut this part or shorten it. Also, you need to read the essay question about ecotourism again and try not to digress from it.'

Participant's 2nd draft

natural areas with the specific object of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural aspects (both past and present) found in these areas' (1988. p.13)

This definition involves two criteria – nature –based attractions and educational or appreciative motivations. Now the two criteria are thought as part of three core prerequisites of an ecotourism experience. The third criterion, environmental and sociocultural sustainability has been defined in many different types. For example, there is a define as its 'purposeful travel to natural areas to understand the cultural and natural history of the.

It is observed that this participant did not respond to any of the above suggestions. S/he ignored the teacher's feedback and as a result, irrelevant information was repeated and thus the essay was produced.

Another participant's annotation on the first draft: *'... however, soft ecotourism shows mass tourism… and it is different from hard ecotourism in terms of the stimulated size in the industry ecotourism. I think in these sentences I have used not good words or expressions. Should are be revised?'*

Teacher feedback: 'Of course, yes. You used unclear words and expressions, such as "stimulated size of the ecotourism" What did you mean by *stimulated size*? Did you mean that *soft ecotourism is often connected to a travel agency for large groups and short trips?* If not, what type of size that might be then? Also, it was not clear what you meant by the expression *industry ecotourism*.'

Participant's 2nd draft:

however soft ecotourism shows mass tourism and it is the difference which

is favors to account for the change of the estimated size of the ecotourism

industry. With the development of ecotourism, soft ecotourism should be

concentrated on limiting group size. hard ecotourism is more broadly dispersed.

We thcan see from the case study 'whalewatch kaikoura, New Zealand', the

aim of it is town of kaikoura has apparently applied for environmental

It can be said that only a few changes occurred in these participants' 2nd draft. Their annotations did not specify their concerns clearly and hence the teacher's feedback might not be effective enough for the participants to produce better drafts.

However, the other *10* participants showed significant improvement in their writing: in terms of the *five* aspects of writing, especially content and grammar. An example of these participants is:

Participant's annotation on the 1st draft: *'Wearing and Neil (2000) cited different authors' opinions about Ecotourism. Although, ecotourism cannot be defined clearly. I will explain it through two approaches. The first one is ... the second ... . Then I will choose several criteria to compare. What I want to say is that although Ecotourism is difficult to identify...(Wearing & Neil,2000) cited different authors' opinions in terms of two approaches. Would the reader understand this by those paragraphs?'*

Teacher feedback: ' I am afraid they won't be, because of many errors. Firstly, your use of the *full* stop after the word Ecotourism and the comma after '*although*' is wrong. You must connect the two statements with '*although*' either at the beginning with a comma or in the middle of the sentence without a comma. Secondly, try not to write what you do. You have already detailed this in the sufficient introduction. Make statements using *'the passive'* e.g., ' two approaches will be shown …'. A comparison and a contract of these approaches will be given …'

Participant's 2nd draft:

'…although ecotourism is difficult to identify, Wearing and Neil (2000) cited different authors' opinions. Each of them has different emphases. In succession, two approaches will be shown …'

From the 2nd draft, the participants showed an understanding of the feedback. Thus, the suggestions regarding the use of commas and tenses were used to reinforce the student's progress in writing. Table 4 represents an overview of the 2nd draft's results.

Table (4) Results of the 2nd Draft Improvement

	The number of participants	
- Made changes	18/48 = 37%	37%
- Few changes **- Suggestions ignored**	18/48 = 37% 12/48 = 26%	63%

- *Diary 3:*

The aim of asking the participants to write their diaries again was to explore and evaluate both the participants' sense of satisfaction with the feedback that was given with their annotations and whether the use of the SM has achieved the expected improvement in their writing skills. Therefore, the teacher researcher started to analyze the findings and transferred the collected data from the 2nd diaries onto the clear and simple table (see table 4) according to the directive guide diary (2) prompts, to make sure of the findings from the 2nd drafts.

Table (5): Analysis of the Directive Guide Diary 2 Results

*Prompt 1***: Did you find the feedback you received on your annotations more** ***effective and helpful than previous teacher written comments? Why?***				
'Yes'			**'No'**	
It indicated my problem area; thus, I received a direct, positive answer.	12		I found it difficult to understand and	
It provided the kind of help I needed that probably would not otherwise have been noted by the teacher.	6	>(18/48)	thus, I made few or no changes.	30 > (30/48)
Prompt 2: Did the self-monitoring technique improve your writing?				
'Yes'			**'No'**	
- Definitely 'yes'		(18/48)	- Not much - A little bit	*18* *12* (30/48)

It is clear that the participants had different points of view regarding the feedback they received. The majority did not pay much attention to the feedback on their SM annotations. *30* participants argued that they found it useless to do so, as the teacher offered some suggestions on the SM annotations encouraging participants to revise them themselves. Thus, there was little change or improvement in their 2nd drafts. Indeed, they showed unimpressive insight into the effects of the SM feedback on their writing. One student noted: *' think I need more time to see whether the using of SM feedback has improved my writing or not'.* While others, in particular *18* participants argued that being provided with this type of feedback in their essays was very useful and helped them to improve their writing skills. Overall, they showed impressive insight and preference for this specific type of feedback as they expressed that they could remember the changes and they would not make the same mistakes in later essays. They appreciated the opportunity to use the SM. One student wrote: *'The feedback on the annotations was effective and as a result, I would not forget this'.*

- *Focus Group.*

As stated before, the focus group was used as a complementary method that supports the essay and the diary tasks to discuss the students' attitudes and views on the use of the SM technique in improving writing skills. Therefore, it can be pointed out that the questions that the participants were asked were closely related to the questions of the first and the second diaries. *(See table 5).*

Table (6): Analysis of the Focus Group Data

General Questions			
Q1: Did you find it easy to be trained on the self-monitoring technique in writing?			
'Yes' It was easy *12 >* (12/48)			
It was quite difficult *6*			
It was very difficult *30 >* (36/48)			
Q2: what problems did you find when you use the self-monitoring technique I your writing?			
I found problems such as:	>(36/48)	I did not find any problem(s) in using the technique	
My lack of fluency which meant I was unable to express my annotation.	*18*		
It was my first time using the technique in writing, so I needed training before applying it**.**	*12*		>(12/48)
I needed time.	6		
Q3: Did you find the feedback you received on your annotations more effective and helpful than previous written teacher comments on general writing skills? If so, what were the reasons for its effectiveness?			
'Yes > (18/48)		'No' > (30/48)	
It was very helpful	➢	*Not much*	
I received direct and positive feedback, instead of having to rely on the much more comments**.**	12	It was difficult to understand.	18
I became an active participant in discussion.	6	*A little bit*	
		I preferred detailed teacher comments where all my mistakes are corrected.	12
Specific questions.			

Q4: Did the self-monitoring technique improve your writing?			
'Yes'	> (12/48)	'No'	>(36/48)
It did	12	*Not much*	18
		A little bit	18

Q5: What is your view of self-monitoring in writing as a way of encouraging learner-independence rather than reliance on the teacher?		
It teaches us to take more responsibility for what we write.	12	
It places us in the position of the reader**.**	18	
It makes us 'self-directed' students; we identify our problem areas for the teacher to deal with.	18	>(48/48)

Q6: Did you find that using self-monitoring allowed you to express you concerns?				
Yes, it did	12	>(12/48)	Not much	36	>(36/48)

Q7: Did you prefer the self-monitoring in writing?			
'Yes'		'No'	
		I disagree with SM in writing.	
I believe that it could help me revise my drafts, and improve my writing proficiency.	14　>(14/48)	34　> (34/48)	

The focus group discovered that the SM did not work with all students; most of them did not like making annotations on their essays, and even if they made annotations, they only wrote a few general annotations regarding one or two aspects of writing. When they were asked why, one of them replied *'First of all, I just tried to make some annotations because it was the requirement of you, and if I made annotations on some part, it was also useless to do so, and if I asked questions, you would only offer some suggestions that myself had to revise, so I regarded it as a waste of time'.* Another one said, *'It was the first time I used it and my low level did not help me to make full use of it, so I considered annotations as only a task, and I want to finish quickly'.* In contrast, the others stated that SM was easy and most helpful to them. It allowed them to contribute to a dialogue concerning their writing since they indicated what was important to them. In brief, it identified their concerns as one participant said, *' I felt that I communicated exactly what I want, while without making annotations, I just tried to make the whole thing much simpler'.* When they also were asked

about the feedback they received, they mentioned that the direct feedback on their annotations made a significant difference, especially to those related to the content and the grammar.

Comparing all the views, it can be said that the majority did not prefer the technique. They claimed it was not especially helpful for them as they still considered themselves low-level students. They may see its effectiveness in their future writings. A minority, however, believed that it could help them revise their drafts and improve their writing proficiency.

c- Reflections phase: this phase was to reflect on questions *2&3* based on the findings from the observation phase.

Q2: How self-monitoring techniques may affect English major students' skills in the faculty of education in writing? Does SM improve their writing?

After checking the percentages and the ideas reported in tables *3& 4* of both the 2nd drafts and the 2nd diary regarding the students' writing improvement, it revealed that about two-thirds (*63%*) regarded making annotations as an ineffective way to improve their writing, while the remaining third (*37%*) of the participants did all they could to ensure that the annotations had a positive effect on their writing. Overall, it was concluded that there was not a significant improvement in the students' essays after using the SM technique. This was after a single cycle of SM and teacher feedback. Therefore, it could be argued that improvements in the participants" writing might be seen if they were to put forward further annotations on the teacher's feedback, thus starting a 2nd cycle of SM and teacher feedback.

Q3: What are English major students' attitudes towards using the SM?

After checking all views reported in the focus- group besides Table *5*, it can be concluded that a large proportion of the interviewees had rather negative attitudes towards the SM technique. They regarded it as an ineffective way of improving their writing and it might only help in improving grammar. They did not accept that it could help with the other aspects of writing. They also mentioned that the SM might work only with those with a high level of English. This result might have been affected by the time of this research as it was not long enough to show significant improvements in writing skills. Consequently, their experience of the SM was less than positive. However, they were really satisfied as the SM developed their sense of responsibility over what they wrote and then led them to autonomous learning.

3. Conclusion.

This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of using the SM technique in improving students' writing. A qualitative approach was employed. Furthermore, triangulation took place using three research methods –written essays, diaries, and focus groups. That was to ensure the reliability and the validity of the results. Based on the findings, it could be suggested that short-term training and teaching on how to use self-annotations in improving students' writing skills did not help the participants to make full use of the technique. Thus, they did not score a significant improvement in the 2nd drafts of their essay. It also discovered that the participants did not rate the technique except for one issue; that the annotations may encourage student- independence in learning writing. This was the only finding that was supported by the other studies which have used different methods of data collection such as Ball et al., (2010), Bambang (2016), Akmilia et al., (2017) and Vorgelegt et al., (2020).

4. Recommendations

Teachers who wish to use this technique need to prepare the students by providing long-term training on how to use annotations effectively. Teachers themselves also need to be prepared well for different patterns of student use. They also need to know SM in writing may work effectively with advanced students who know their areas of difficulty and can articulate and describe their concerns. If the students are at a low level of writing, teachers should be prepared to offer extra help in identifying problem areas in their students' writing.

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Appendix 1
Directive Diary Guide 1

Here are a few prompts to guide you but you should write what _YOU_ feel is important and relevant.

1) Did you use the self-monitoring technique in your writing?
2) Did you find it easy to express yourself through annotations on your writing?
3) What are the areas that you pay the most attention to?
   I- Global aspects (content, organization, and transitions).
   II- Language aspects (grammar and vocabulary).
4) What problems did you find when using self-monitoring in writing?

Appendix 2
Samples of Participants' Diary 1

1)

I don't use self-monitoring technique in my writing.

I find it very difficult to express my enquiries on my writing.

I my pay more attention in organization, and traslation.

I am not sure where I can use self-monitoring technique.

2)

Yes, I use Self-monitoring technique in my writing. Because I major in English in University, I can find the grammar problem sometimes. However, I can't find all the mistake in my writing so I need the assist from dictionaries or teachers. I pay much attention on global aspect. I can't organize my writing and sometimes I write aimlessly. I found that it's quit difficult that when I self-monitoring because English is not my first language, I make mistakes sometimes.

Appendix 3

❖ **Directive Diary Guide 2**

Here are a few prompts to guide you but you should write what <u>YOU</u> feel is important and relevant.

1) Did you find the feedback you received on your annotations more effective and helpful than previous teacher-written feedback? Why?
2) Did the self-monitoring technique improve your writing?

✓ Definitely 'Yes'.
✓ Not much.
✓ A little bit.

❖ **Samples of Participant's Diary 2**

1)

Yes, because self-monitoring helps me to find my weakness of English writing. and I think it's hope helpful to me for the future study

. Yes. Teacher's feedback on my annotations or comments are more effective because she know clear about the points that I'm not sure and it's easy for her to help me.

. I think I need more time to see whether it improves my writing.

2)

I preferred self-monitoring, and it was useful to know my weaknesses. However, it was little bit waste of time.

The feedback for most paragraphs gave me some help because vocabulary and grammar must depend on me.

To find the weakness that I have, improving my writing skills should be long-term work. It helps not all things.

Appendix 4
Focus-group Schedule

<u>**Time of focus group:**</u>
<u>**Date:**</u>
<u>**Place:**</u>
<u>**Interviewer:**</u>
<u>**Interviewees:**</u>
<u>**Time duration:**</u>

<u>**General questions:**</u>
1) Did you find it easy to be trained in the self-monitoring technique in writing?
2) What problems did you find when you used the SM in your writing?
3) Did you find the feedback you received on your annotations more effective and helpful than *previous written teacher comments on general writing skills*? If so, what were the reasons for its effectiveness?

<u>**Specific questions:**</u>
4) Did the self-monitoring technique improve?
5) What is your view of self-morning in writing as a way of encouraging learner-independence rather than reliance on teachers?
6) Did you find that using self-monitoring allowed you to express your concerns?
7) Did you prefer the self-monitoring in writing?