

From Reflection to Resolution: University Students' Voices on the Role of Self-Assessment in Guided Writing

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ABSTRACT

In the process of learning English, writing has always been known as an important component to be acquired especially for students of English as a Second Language. The exploration of playing with words and language in writing has always been challenging for the students. Writing is put in a complex and significant level especially in academic contexts because it 'serves as a primary means of assessment, knowledge construction, and scholarly engagement', (Ariyanti, 2016). It involves not just running down the ideas on papers but the style of composing the elements of writing well. This is when writing is seen as a progressive journey and in this journey, Ariyanti (2016) also explains when students are about to start writing on a certain topic, they should have known what to write and how to explore about the topic. Then, read over the writing and do some corrections and make amendments when necessary. As such, in this process of writing, students should walk through the process from thoroughly to produce meaningful and logical ideas. However, the process seems to be a problem for ESL students to understand because they have not been familiar with the step-to-step process of writing. They face difficulties in writing especially when it involves vocabulary, grammar and text organization and most of the time, it hinders their ability in producing effective writing. Thus, this paper is focusing on how self-assessment tool can help in the process of academic writing especially for ESL students. This is because, the need for ESL students to know the mechanic of writing is important in encouraging learner autonomy, reflection and strategic learning. As a result, with the understanding of English writing is not merely a skill to be mastered but a developmental process that shapes students' academic and professional identities.

Keywords: Guided Writing, Self-Assessment, ESL Writing Challenges

INTRODUCTION

English is considered as a source of self-improvement and career success for university students as it provides access to local and global resources. Also, it is seen as an official language that is used in documenting especially in business, education and communication. Therefore, in meeting these requirements, various theories and hypotheses have been found to facilitate both students and educators to impact the knowledge of second language learning (Selvaraj & Aziz, 2019). A paradigm shifts in language learning from teacher-centered to student-centered lies on the concept of autonomous learning whereby it gives the authority for the students to take ownership of their educational journey and actively participate in their assessment. However, learning a second language is never an easy road especially when it comes to writing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Guided Writing in ESL Learning

In guided writing, modelling, prompts, and structured activities are some commonly approach used in ESL writing activities to encourage students to develop independence in writing. It provides them with explicit instructions on various writing strategies while offering individualised feedback and supports. Dieni (2022) stated that having to apply guided writing in class can help the students in improving their writing skills too as they can learn to construct good sentences with correctly written grammar based on the educator's feedback. They may also improve their vocabularies dealing with the topic of their writing.

Dieni (2022) also added in her findings that this kind of writing helps students to produce any kind of text preceded with the modelled paragraph given by the educators. Thus, students can improve their vocabulary mastery through the exercises guided by the educators. However, despite the structured assistance, many students continue to struggle with writing issues such as grammar, vocabulary choice, idea development, organization and time management. This suggests that guided learning alone may not fully address the challenges ESL students face in academic writing.

Self-Assessment as a Tool in ESL Writing

Self-assessment has come to gain the attention as a complementary tool in language learning, particularly in ESL writing instruction. This enables students to reflect on their own performance, identify strengths and weaknesses and setting goals for self-improvement. As supported by Mohd Hafizuddin & Razali (2019), ESL students can be excellent sources of feedback when self-assessment is employed in the learning process, through which they can provide accurate and useful information to promote meaningful learning. By integrating self-assessment in ESL writing, students can take charge of their writing journey moving to autonomous learning. Though existing studies highlight the potential of self-assessment in fostering learner independence, there is still limited research that focus on ESL students' voices on how self-assessment can be used to confront writing challenges especially in improving their performance in guided writing.

Therefore, the focus of this paper is to address the gap by exploring the challenges faced by the ESL university students in their guided writing process. Also, to delve into how self-assessment tool can help in the process of guided writing especially for ESL university students.

DISCUSSION

Challenges of ESL Students in Guided Writing

In language learning especially for ESL students, students are expected to be good in all aspects of language skills which include speaking, listening, reading and writing. The abilities to acquire the skills will set certain expectations in developing their communicative competence in both spoken and written language. It is believed that through writing activities especially, students will have the opportunity to apply the process of thinking using effective words and convey ideas appropriately according to the setting (Yunisha, Sriati Usman and Abdul Waris, 2013). As to achieve the expectations, one of the suggested techniques in language acquisition that is expected to have improved the students' ability in writing is by applying guided writing in language learning. This approach provides a visual framework for the students to guide their thinking and help them to stay focused on their writing tasks.

For ESL students, writing can be seen as the most frustrating skill in which they feel intimidated with their poor language-related issues. Shehzadi & Krishnasamy (2018) the poor language acquisition among ESL students in terms of vocabulary and the use of linguistic features will lead to the feeling of fear in them in the process of writing. Most of the time, students only write and force their thinking ability only for exam and test purpose. Also, the issues of grammar, spelling, vocabulary, syntax and stylistics may hinder students' ability to deliver ideas appropriately and clearly, (Borang & Gupta, 2025). This is also supported by Liao & Wong, (2020) in their studies that many students consider English writing as difficult because they are generally poor in the use of linguistic features.

Additionally, the poor performance in producing a good writing is contributed by the factor of anxiety. According to Shehzadi & Krishnasamy (2018), students tend to perform negatively if they do not enjoy learning the target language and usually, the feeling of anxiousness about their writing ability will affect their emotions in writing. In another study by Jung (2020), it is found difficult for the students to stay focused and motivated especially when they are asked to write on a topic that may not be of their interest. Thus, this will impede the thinking process and affect the idea organisation, creativity and imaginative in guided writing. The lack of confidence in producing the sentences and afraid of making mistakes lead to the increase of anxiety among ESL students in writing.

As guided writing is commonly related to using graphic organisation and templates, there are certain formats that should be followed by the students. Another contribution to the challenges is the inability to structure and organise their ideas and writing naturally according to the organisation template. In a study by Borang & Gupta (2025), the coherence, cohesion, logical sequencing, appropriate paragraphing development and the use of transition devices are the critical barriers to effective guided writing. With the formal writing being introduced, students tend to limit their style of writing and thinking. Instead, they relied on memorisation of the production of ideas rather than engaging with critical writing. Overall, the studies offer meaningful insights into the challenges faced by the ESL students in guided writing with suggested pedagogical theories and strategies in addressing them. It is important for both educators and students to be practical and brave to apply the various styles of adapting the learning paths. As suggested by (Selvaraj & Aziz, 2019) that writing goes beyond the school scope in order for the ESL students to master the language.

The Use of Self-Assessment as a Tool for Guided Writing

In general, the process of engaging students in effective self-assessment underlies three principles, as proposed by Andrade and Valcheva (2009) which involve; (1) the articulation of expectations, (2) self-assessing, (3) revising. In writing context, these steps involve first with the clear expectations set by the educators on what the task is all about and how will it be done. Educators can also describe each criterion in the self-assessment that will be used by the students. As supported by Hafizuddin & Razali (2019), reaching towards an agreement with the educators on the criterion for the task will make a quality work to be produced. For example, in language teaching for guided writing, the process starts with educators sharing on the importance of the task, the types of writing elements, the division of marks involved, and this should be discussed before the students started their guided writing. Then, the step moves to the production of an outline, brainstorming and generating ideas of the selected topic with continual monitoring on the progress of their writing by making improvement from time to time. At this stage, students are often to be found struggling because they have limited language vocabulary, difficulties in expressing their ideas and thoughts on paper and are too cautious of making mistakes related to sentence structures.

The next step involves students to produce their drafts of the writing task given and continually monitor their progress by making comparisons and improvements from their previous writing. As suggested by Andrade & Valcheva, (2009), students can write their own notes to make them aware of the changes made for their final drafts. Through this self-assessing process, students will be able to see their writing improvements in terms of idea generations, language and punctuations. This step emphasizes the independent learning and thus makes the process be meaningful for them. In addition, the third step of involves the self-assessment feedback to be used as revision for the students.

In a study by Harris (1997), he suggested that teacher can compile the common mistakes made by students in guided writing process and produce a checklist for self-editing so that students can refer and revise their work. In another study, the use of self-assessment is found to show improvements across various aspects of the writing skill which include content, language and organisation for the required task (Ghazala & Hayah, 2024). However, Fristiara, Sumardi & Drahati (2018) supported that the process of self-assessing their own writing task, the repetition of reviewing and amending the writing task has made the students to be more careful and develop positive attitudes of improving the task. However, they argued that grammar errors can be identified by using the self-assessment without the supervision from the educators.

Research indicates that with self-assessment in writing, students can concentrate on their education better, able to track their development and look for methods to modify and enhance their ability (Eswaey & Ihmoumah, 2024). The researchers also highlighted this tool has great potential to nurture learner autonomy and foster self-regulation. It is believed that when students involve in the self-assessment process, they need to make judgement for their own work whether they are right or wrong, valid or reliable. Therefore, this process needs active participation among students rather than just being passive and receive the information.

The concern of making students to involve directly in their learning process has gained attention and interest among educators to apply self-assessment. Litz (2009) found that students can push themselves to finish their writing task based on the expected schedule. The clear expectations as mentioned above on the self-assessment

steps have made clear to the students on what they are expected to do. In conclusion, giving the self-assessment questionnaire to students as a tool in completing their guided writing seems to hold significant potential in enhancing meaningful learning especially for ESL students in guided writing. Overall, this discussion suggests that the challenges faced by the ESL students in university in guided writing can be assisted applying self-assessment tool in a positive way.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the approach of using self-assessment as a tool for guided writing plays a significant role in the effectiveness of individual learning, enhancing motivation and leading towards meaningful learning. It seems to not only encourage the meta-cognitive parts of the students in producing good writing but also promote interpersonal enhancement in terms of enthusiasm and ability. In applying this approach, educators should also realise on the needs of giving feedback and respond to the students' progress to allow them to identify their strengths and weaknesses in guided writing. Educators should enforce the scaffold opportunities for the students to move towards better learning process with more independent assessments.

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