

Original articles

Role of Self-Assessment in Improving Students' Writing: A Systematic Review

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ARTICLE INFO

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Received: 14-05-2024

Accepted: 22-06-2024

Published: 26-06-2024

Keywords. Self-Assessment, Students' Writing, Systematic Review.

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ABSTRACT

The process of writing is highly significant in the field of education as a means of communication. Writing proficiency is an important skill that EFL students are required to achieve during their academic careers. However, developing academic writing skills can be difficult for students as well as teachers. Various instructional strategies and interventions have been investigated to improve the quality of students' writing. Self-assessment is one such method that has received a great deal of attention. With the growing emphasis on self-assessment in students' writing development, the review aims to provide an updated comprehensive synthesis of the current literature on self-assessment and its relationship with writing skills. The current review seeks to identify, describe, and synthesize the most rigorously available recent evidence base on the role self-assessment plays to improve EFL students' writing skills. About 30 papers from 2010 to 2023 that were relevant to the topic of this paper were selected for the review process. Findings of this review indicate that self-assessment can play a role in improving the learning experience of students in general through improving their self-awareness and satisfaction; let alone improving writing skills. That is, the more students employ self-assessment and are aware of their mistakes, the better their writing skills are. Overall, learning writing skills is as teaching it, always challenging. Some recommendations for EFL teachers and implications for policy are discussed.

Cite this article. Eswaey G, Ihmoumah H. Role of Self-Assessment in Improving Students' Writing: A Systematic Review. *Alq J Med App Sci.* 2024;7(Supp2):94-106. <https://doi.org/10.54361/ajmas.2472214>

INTRODUCTION

Recent decade has witnessed a paradigm shift in language education, moving from teacher-centered towards student-centered approaches [1]. At the heart of this shift lies the concept of autonomous learning, empowering learners to take ownership of their educational journey and actively participate in their assessment [2]. Within this landscape, self-assessment (SA) has emerged as a powerful tool, gaining substantial traction across educational levels due to its potential to nurture learner autonomy and foster self-regulation [3,4]. This review study mainly investigates self-assessment (SA), which is a learner-oriented assessment method that has gained popularity among practitioners in recent years [5], state that with the release of Lado's Language Testing in 1961, SA first made an appearance in the field of second language

acquisition (SLA). Language assessment was done structurally at first since language was thought of as a collection of separate elements; however, later psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic approaches produced integrative global measures [5] Constructivism brought formative assessment and learning process front and center, replacing summative assessment and learning outcome. Because constructivists believe that knowledge is created by learners rather than acquired, teachers should encourage students to invest in their learning and teach them to assess both their own learning process and their final product [6].

Educational assessment and testing replaced psychometric testing in 1976, and learning-based testing emerged as one of the main objectives in education [7]. In order to increase the significance of learning in the classroom, alternative assessment has been used ever since. Prior to the change to assessment for learning (AfL), which aims to enhance and promote learning, assessment was largely used to evaluate students' learning [8]. AfL assists the teacher in exploring what the students have already learned and what they still need to learn. The evaluation known as AoL, on the other hand, is "used to give grades or to satisfy the accountability demands of an external authority" [9].

Since self- and peer-assessment appear to affect learners' independence and autonomy, they have garnered increased attention among the different alternative assessment modalities in recent years [10]. With the help of SA, students can concentrate on their education, track their development, and look for methods to modify, enhance, or adjust it [11]. According to [12], enhancing learning and realization, aiding with academic self-regulation, and monitoring and managing one's own learning are some of the purposes of integrating students in SA. However, because they have not had much opportunity to use the target language, EFL learners may find it difficult to assess their own learning [13]. Despite the widespread belief that SA improves students' learning, learners' negative beliefs about their own efforts and abilities can have detrimental effects, including underestimating their actual accomplishments, feeling incompetent, and skipping classes [14].

Some academics see SA as solely a quantitative evaluation of an individual's performance based on the number of right responses [15,16]. Others believe it to be an effective qualitative method of assessment and learning [17]. SA is classified into two categories by [18]; they are: development-oriented and performance-oriented. Performance-oriented SA is summative in nature, emphasizing the students' achievement and grade. On the other hand, formative assessment that is development-oriented places more emphasis on the learner's progress. It motivates students to reflect on the quality of their learning and work, assess how well they meet the established objectives or standards, identify their own strengths and shortcomings, and critically review their work [19]. Furthermore, rather of providing students with feedback, development-oriented SA gives them feed-forward. Although feedback facilitates students' meaningful use of the learning materials [20], it can also become a feed-forward tool if the assessment is linked to the feedback remarks and provides students with the knowledge, they need to improve their future learning [21].

Despite that several academics [22-24] define SA as performance-oriented and a testing instrument, and as development-oriented and learning material by [25], others [26-28] explored it as both performance- and development-oriented which could be used as a testing tool as well as learning material. These three definitional categories demonstrate that, in addition to the dichotomous functions of being either a learning material or a testing tool, SA can also be classified into a third category that serves these two functions concurrently. Rather of restricting the use of SA to a certain phase of the language learning process, a hybrid model allows both the teacher and the student greater flexibility in integrating it throughout the language learning process.

All stages of education are shifting to become more learner-centered, and one of the key learner-centered strategies that may help with testing and learning is SA. SA has not been applied much in educational settings, despite its tremendous theoretical potential. Substantial research studies have been devoted to examine the impact of self-assessment on students' development, specifically in writing performance [29-36]. An overview of the most recent research on SA practices in EFL writing classes is what this systematic review aims to deliver. Since there is scarcity of Arabic studies on SA in the field of EFL writing teaching and learning, this review concentrates on the role of SA in improving EFL students' writing skills and aims to address the following research questions: 1). In what ways do various SA interventions influence EFL students' writing skills? 2). What factors contribute to the effectiveness of SA interventions in different EFL writing contexts?

METHODS

Study design

A systematic review of qualitative data was used to provide a comprehensive overview of evidence available in the literature up to the date of knowledge cutoff in December 2023. A qualitative review was deemed useful in extracting

rich data. To address the research questions, inductive thematic analysis method was used to analyze the qualitative data obtained from a review of recent literature.[37] state that "thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (p. 79). According to [38], inductive thematic analysis is a useful and popular qualitative research technique that enables an adaptable and sophisticated investigation of data.

Search strategy

In order to systematically analyze the topic, different search strategies (e.g. similar terms) were tested in various electronic databases such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, Taylor & Francis, PsycINFO, to name a few as to ensure reliability and to yield best results. The reviewers searched relevant studies published in peer-reviewed journals, conference proceedings, and dissertations. The open-access studies were published between 2010 and 2023. Searching in different search engines, specific keywords and Boolean operators were used including "alternative assessment," "self-assessment," "SA," "students' writing," "students' outcomes," "role," "impact," "effect" and related keywords. The search strategy aimed to capture a broad spectrum of studies related to self-assessment in writing instruction.

Inclusion criteria

Numerous publications of more than two thousand resulted from initial search and were screened by reviewing the titles, keywords, and abstracts. Nevertheless, the majority of the research studies failed to match the inclusion criteria. Studies were included if they met the following criteria: (a) designed to implement self-assessment interventions; (b) examined its impact on students' writing, (c) covering articles, master's, and doctoral theses, (d) published between 2010 and 2023, and (e) published in English. Based on the selection criteria, only the studies that specifically addressed the research objectives of the current study were considered.

Exclusion criteria

Researchers excluded studies with insufficient data and those not linked to the writing skills. Inaccessibility was another reason that excluded many of the articles. In conclusion, a total of 30 papers met the criteria for the systematic review and were included in the data-set for analysis.

Reliability and validity

To ensure a systematic and extensive search process, the search was carried out with two professors in the field. The titles, abstracts and full texts were screened by both scholars independently. In every phase, the scholars discussed the selection process and ambiguous cases together.

RESULTS

Methods Used in the Studies under Review

From thousands of open access studies till 2023, the researchers found only 30 studies which met the inclusion criteria. These were either quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods. Of the 30 included studies, sixteen (n=16) studies used quantitative methods among which employed experimental design, quasi-experimental design, and survey design. Four of the studies (n=4) were qualitative studies involving: interviews, classroom observations, document analysis, journaling, in-depth semi structured interview and a case study. Ten participants (n=10) employed a mixed methodology approach, utilizing Likert scale questionnaires and opinion questionnaires for quantitative data collection, and employing semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, continuing document analysis, and participants' portfolios for qualitative data collection. See table 1.

Table 1. Methods used in the studies under review.

| Methods | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------|-----------|------------|
| Quantitative | 16 | 53 |
| Qualitative | 4 | 13 |
| Mixed methods | 10 | 33 |

Quantitative approaches were utilized in the majority (53%) of the research, followed by mixed methods (33%) and qualitative methods (13%). This indicates a significant focus on quantitative research in the field. It is essential to contemplate the reasons behind the prevalence of quantitative methods. It may indicate a preference for an unbiased

assessment of the influence of SA on English as a Foreign Language writing. The emphasis on statistically significant findings may serve the purpose of establishing causal relationships or emphasizing bigger sample sizes and the generalizability of conclusions.

Participants of the Studies under Review

As presented in table 2, twenty-seven (n=27) studies focused on students only where the review has involved learners from institutes, university students, school students with 12 years-old being the youngest age group involved. Only three (n=3) studies focused on both students and teachers as their respondents. There were zero (n=0) studies focused on EFL teachers solely; since the rationale of the current review is to seek the role SA plays on EFL students' writing skills.

Table 2. Participants involved in the studies under review.

| Participants | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------|-----------|------------|
| Student | 27 | 90 |
| Teacher | 0 | 0 |
| Student and Teacher | 3 | 10 |

The vast majority (90%) of studies focused solely on students. Only 10% included both students and teachers. This reflects a strong focus on understanding how SA impacts student learners. The lack of research solely on teachers raises questions about how teachers perceive and implement SA in their own practice, what challenges teachers face when using SA, and how teacher training might better equip teachers to use SA effectively. Thus, further research focusing on teachers is necessary to understand their perspectives and experiences with SA.

RESULTS

Table 3 shows the findings of reviewed studies on alternative assessment, namely, self-assessment in EFL writing classroom from 2010-2023. The selected research studies were analyzed in accordance with the aims of the current study, resulting in the identification of two overarching themes, they are: (1) impact of SA on EFL writing and (2) factors influencing SA effectiveness detailed in the following sections respectively.

Table 3. Findings of reviewed studies on alternative assessment.

| Author(s) and year of publication | Focus | Methods (Design/ Sample, Instruments) | Analysis | Setting | Findings | Limitations |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Phuong et al. (2023) | The effects of using analytical rubrics in peer and self-assessment on EFL students' writing proficiency: a Vietnamese contextual study | Quantitative/ 44 university English major students/ identical analytical rubrics based on Jacobs et al. (1981) | The teacher and two additional evaluators assessing students' essays/ SPSS version 20.0 | Vietnam | The SA group demonstrated significantly superior performance compared to the PA group, with noticeable improvements across all evaluated criteria. | Small sample size limits generalizing data. |
| Tari and Safitri (2023) | The Effect of Self-Assessment Towards Students' Writing Competency | Quantitative/ 100 Elementary Level Course Students/ writing competency test/ analytical scoring rubric/ self-assessment checklist/ teaching scenario. | Descriptive and inferential analysis methods. | Indonesia | There is no significant effect of self-assessment on students' writing competency separately. | Only statistical data. |
| Rezai et al. (2022) | Developmental potential of self-assessment reports for high school students' | 21 Iranian high-school students. Qualitative study of Self-assessment Report and then a focus group | The analysis of the self-assessment reports was done through the microgenetic | Iran | Findings documented a significant improvement in the students' writing skills in terms of | Only qualitative data gathered. No place was for students' opinions about the intervention |

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|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | writing skills: A qualitative study | interview was run with six students. | development approach. the data of the focus group interview were analyzed through a thematic coding analysis. | | content, language, organization, and task requirements. | nor their teachers' beliefs. |
| Zhang and Zhang (2022). | Sustaining Learners' Writing Development: Effects of Using Self-Assessment on Their Foreign Language Writing Performance and Rating Accuracy | 92 English major sophomore students and two lecturers. A quasi-experimental approach. Collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, this research adopted a mixed-methods approach/ Pre- and post-writing tests and pre- and post- SA tasks using self-assessment of writing rubric. | Independent and paired-samples t-tests, Pearson correlation and SPSS 25 were used. | China | the intervention group experienced a larger increase in their holistic writing performance and rating accuracy when compared with the comparison group | SA was compared to peer assessment instead of using the traditional teacher assessment in the comparison group. In addition to the inadequate time for the intervention. |
| Nielsen (2021). | Peer and self-assessment practices for writing across the curriculum: learner-differentiated effects on writing achievement | 120 First-year college students. Quasi-experimental. Observation notes and interview for qualitative data and pre-test and post-test rubrics for the quantitative data. | Qualitative: inductive thematic analysis. Quantitative: scoring rubrics, then a two-way ANOVA was used. | USA | In contrast to peer methods, SA is not yet as widespread in the teaching of writing, but supporters advocate its use overlap with those given in support of peer review. | Differences in teacher behaviors and styles can impact classroom results and learning outcomes. Also, rating of writing is always subjective. |
| Zhang (2021). | Effects of Using Self-assessment on English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) Students' Self-efficacy Beliefs and Writing Improvement | 668 tertiary students and 2 lecturers participated in the mixed methods approach/ Pre-and post-questionnaires, writing tasks, SA of writing tasks, learning journals, semi-structured interviews, and class observation were utilized to collect data from student participants. | Thematic analysis, independent and paired samples t-tests, and Pearson-correlation | New Zealand | Chinese EFL learners held a medium level of self-efficacy for self- assessment of writing, and their self-efficacy levels were enhanced after the self- assessment intervention. Also, there was a large increase in students' writing performance. | Since convenience sampling was used, findings cannot be generalized. Also, lecturers' experiences were not explored. |
| Ferry (2020). | Teaching Writing through Self-Assessment and Analytical Scoring | 24 higher level 5 th semester university students. Action research of quantitative and qualitative methods. Essays, SA, analytical scoring Rubrics, observation sheet, interview guide. | Quantitative data was analyzed by using statistical technique and qualitative data was analyzed by using descriptive interpretative technique. | Indonesia | The findings indicated the improvement in students' writing skill with the implementation of SA and analytical scoring. | Small sample size |
| Fathi and Khodabakhsh (2019) | The role of self-assessment and peer-assessment in improving writing performance of | Quantitative/ 46 English major university students/ Two timed- writing essays administered as the pre-test and post-test. | One-Way Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was performed. | Iran | Students in the peer-assessment group outperformed those in the SA group in terms of writing performance. | Small sample make it difficult to generate such a result. |

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|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | Iranian EFL students. | | | | | |
| Xu (2019). | Scaffolding students' self-assessment of their English essays with annotated samples: A mixed-methods study | Quasi-experimental/ 54 university students/ | Rubric, annotated samples, interviews. | China | Findings suggested the effectiveness of annotation-based rubric-referenced SSA on understanding the task requirements, initiating self-regulatory behaviors of students, and improving their confidence in SA; however, students still wanted to receive teachers' assistance. | Collection of data through convenience sampling. Also, unable to adopt a stricter experimental design. |
| Liu and Brantmeier (2019). | "I know English": Self-assessment (SA) of foreign language (FL) reading and writing abilities among young Chinese learners of English. | Empirical/ 106 Chinese learners (ages 12 to 14)/ a Writing Task (a picture-based writing prompt), and criterion-referenced SA Items. | Preliminary independent sample t-test and Spearman's correlational analysis. R Software was used for data analysis. | China | Study found significant correlation between SA writing score and writing production. Findings also show that the tendency of young learners towards self-assessing their foreign language writing abilities accurately. | Study could not capture the accuracy of SA scores in addition to its limitation to young language learners. |
| CÖMERT and KUTLU (2018) | The Effect of Self-Assessment on Achievement in Writing in English. | 60, B1 level, university students of the academic year 2014-2015. Experimental/ English Writing Tasks, a scoring rubric, and an interview. | Two-way ANOVA for mixed measures, while content analysis method was conducted to analyze the data obtained from the interviews. | Turkey | writing lessons in which students practice self-assessment are more effective in improving the writing skills of students than writing lessons conducted by traditional means. | Sample is not that big. |
| Nimehchisalem et al. (2018) | Developing an SA Guide for Undergraduates' Report writing | Qualitative and data-based methods/ A Guide development project/ 49 second year undergraduates/ An online descriptive writing task/ interviews/ in-house assessment | Excel/ A deductive thematic approach. | Malaysia | Developed a self-assessment tool to help ESL undergraduates in process of writing descriptions of tables and graphs. | The study was limited to a descriptive genre. |
| Ratminingsih et al. (2018). | Self-Assessment: The Effect on Students' Independence and Writing Competence | Experimental/ 425/ 7 th grade High School students/ Questionnaire of students' independence/ And writing competence test. | The data were analyzed using a one-way ANOVA and MANOVA | Indonesia | indicate that SA has an effect on the students' writing competence and independence. | Limited to junior high school students. The study employed a post-test only control group design. |
| Vasu et al. (2018) | The Usefulness and Effectiveness of Argumentative | Qualitative/ Delphi method, semi-structured interview and classroom observation/ perspective | SA Checklist for Undergraduate Argumentative Writing designed | Malaysia | The checklist was an effective tool in reducing teachers' workload. | Small sample size/ little time |

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|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | Writing Self-assessment Checklist in Undergraduate Writing Classrooms | of both students and teachers of SA usefulness. | by Nimehchisalem et al. (2014). | | Additionally, it served as a source of motivation for students to engage in writing activities, deepened their comprehension of argumentative writing, fostered their autonomy as writers, and facilitated a more structured approach to their writing. | |
| Elgadal (2017) | The Effect of Self-Assessment on Inexperienced EFL Students' Writing During Revision | Experimental/ 40, 4 th year university Students, pre-test, post-test and essay writing drafts. | Faigley and Witte's (1981) taxonomy and Bridwell's (1980) scheme for analysing revision/ 3 raters/ | Libya | Students' positive attitude toward SA in EFL writing. | Difficulty in getting access to the students and collecting data/ The low proficiency level of students deterring in analyzing their writing./ Not piloting the research tools. |
| Cahyono and Amrina, (2016). | Peer Feedback, Self-correction, and Writing Proficiency of Indonesian EFL Students | 71 Indonesian university students taking the Essay Writing course/ Experimental. Pre-test and post-test. Students were assigned to do self-correction based on a guideline sheet. | Essays were scored using a scoring rubric, one-way ANOVA | Indonesia | Students conducting self-correction based on a guideline sheet have better ability in writing essays than those who did not conduct self-correction. | SA and PA had equal results! |
| Bowman (2017) | Engaging students in the assessment process: a quantitative Study of peer- and SA | Quasi-Experimental/ 323 high school English students/ /Rubrics, Teacher's comments, Essays prompts. | | USA | Self- and peer assessment process produce greater improvements than teacher feedback. | Lack of self-regulation skills in lower-achieving students/ Possibility of influence of the information taught -prior to the intervention on the gain score. |
| Wang (2017) | Using rubrics in student SA: student perceptions in the English as a foreign language writing context. | Qualitative/ 80 university students/ descriptive, narrative and expository writing/ A rubric, reflective journals and six case study informants' retrospective interviews. | | China | Rubric was perceived useful by students in SA for fostering the Students' self-regulation in writing. The study recognized the factors affecting the rubric's effectiveness in SA. | Limited sample reduces its generalizability to other contexts. |
| Heidarian (2016) | Investigating the effect of using self-assessment on | Quantitative/ 48 female university students/ Self Reporting Questionnaire (SRQ) on writing | Independent samples t-test, and paired t-test | Iran | There is statistically significant increase in the learners' use of writing processes | Small sample and single gender. |

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|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| | Iranian EFL learners' writing | processes and motivation questionnaire. | were implemented. | | as a result of using SA method and their writing has developed. | |
| Mazloomi and Khabiri (2016) | The impact of self-assessment on language learners' writing skill | Quasi-experimental and interview. 60 Iranian university students. /expository genre essays/ SA checklist and scales (or rubrics) | The parametric independent samples t-test. | Iran | SA significantly improves the writing ability of learners by receiving appropriate feedback and training by the teachers. | Limited to expository genre. |
| Fahimi, and Rahimi (2015) | On the Impact of SA Practice on Writing Skill | Mixed methods /41 female intermediate level students/Essay writing/ Questionnaire/ Rubrics/ Interviews | | Iran | Results showed students' writing skill improved gradually. Teachers and learners had positive attitudes towards SA. | Limited number of students and single gender. |
| Hasanah (2015) | The Use of SA in Improving Students' Ability in Writing English Skill | Quasi experimental/ 81, 5 th semester EFL university students/ writing test/ questionnaire | Scoring rubric of J.B.Heaton/ SPSS 15.0 program. | Indonesia | The use of self-assessment in writing English skill is effective in improving students' ability. | Purposive sampling was used. |
| Purwanti (2015) | the Implementation of Self-Assessment in Writing Class: a Case Study At Stba Lia Jakarta | Quantitative case study/ students' essays, students' SA checklist, and students' questionnaires. | Descriptive statistics | Indonesia | Students demonstrate their ability to rewrite writings at several levels, including phrase, surface, content, and lexical levels. Nevertheless, their grammatical precision did not improve considerably. | There was no training beforehand. |
| Sahragard and Mallahi (2014). | Relationship between Iranian EFL Learners Language Learning Styles, Writing Proficiency and SA | Quantitative/ 30 Iranian intermediate EFL students / Language Learning Styles Questionnaire, a writing SA checklist, grading rubric, and the students' written compositions. | Descriptive statistics | Iran | Findings revealed underestimating their writing ability by the more proficient writers whereas overestimation by the majority of the less proficient ones of different aspects of their writing ability. | Small sample size |
| Honsa (2013) | Self-assessment in EFL Writing: A Study of Intermediate EFL Students at a Thai University. | Experimental/ 100 intermediate EFL university students/ Students' writing, self-assessment form and post-study interview. | 2 native speakers' ratings/ interviews, reflective journals and the essay scores were triangulated. | Thailand | Students' essays had improved in three major areas involved in the writing process. | Quantitative sample is not big. |
| Meihami and Varmaghani (2013) | The Implementation of Self-Assessment in | Experimental/ 48 Iranian upper intermediate male students, with age range of 20 to 23/ pretest, | Descriptive statistics | Iran | Participants in the experimental group significantly improved their | Single gender. |

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|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | EFL Writing Classroom: An Experimental Study | teaching instructions, essay writing, Questionnaire of Students' SA, post-test. | | | writing proficiency means score. | |
| Hasani and Moghadam (2012) | The Effect of Self-Assessment on Iranian EFL Learners' Writing Skills | Experimental/ 60 participants/ advanced language learners of a private institute/ Pre-professional Skills Test/ Essay writing/ Oral directions from supervisors | Independent t-test analysis | Iran | The experimental group members who received SA training did much better than those of the control group. | Establishing effect needs longer time. |
| Butler and Lee (2010) | The effects of SA among young EFL learners of English | Mixed methods/ 254, 6th grade students/ Intervention study and interviews/ Summative SA and unit-based SA | Descriptive statistics/ qualitative analysis. | South Korea | Study resulted in positive effects of SA on the performance of students. | Simple implementation of SA. |
| Javaherbaksh (2010) | The Impact of Self-Assessment on Iranian EFL Learners' Writing Skill | Quantitative/ 73 advanced level, male students of English in Zabansara and Marefat Institutions/ a rating checklist, and two writing tests; i.e., pre and post-tests. | Independent t-test | Iran | Self-assessment techniques help the students improve their writing ability as the subjects' level of writing ability was significant. | Single gendered. |
| Andrade et al. (2010) | Rubric-referenced self-assessment and middle school students' writing | Experimental/ 162 middle school students/ Model Essay and a rubric. | | USA | Criteria generation, reading a model, and use of a rubric for SA can help middle school students in producing more effective writing. | Short treatment time/ Use of single model paper/ Non-random different writing assignments/ Teachers with different teaching styles |

International literature has written extensively about the notion of alternative assessment in EFL. Yet, the main area of investigation for Iranian researchers in the current study [39; 40; 31; 41; 42; 30; 43; 44; 45] is the impact of SA interventions on EFL students' writing, which is the same trend this review is taking. The interventions of SA found in these studies are SA checklist, essay rating, scales, grading rubrics, Self-Reporting Questionnaire, and SA report. Similarly, Indonesian studies in the review investigate the effect of SA on improving students' independence and writing competence [46, 47], yet some compare it to peer-assessment [48]. Chinese studies, on the contrary, examined students' rating accuracy when implementing SA [35].

Thematic Analysis of Self-Assessment in EFL Writing Instruction

These findings revealed several themes related to the impact of SA on EFL writing and the factors influencing SA effectiveness.

Theme 1: Impact of SA on EFL Writing

Most studies of the current review [49-47] report improvements across various aspects of the writing skill like content, language, organization, and task requirements. However, some studies [54,44] show no significant difference between SA and other methods like peer assessment [47] went further and showed limited progress in specific areas like grammar.

Not only writing skills that SA can improve, but its positive effect can also reach other areas in the individual development. Several studies in the review [35,55,43] highlight increased self-confidence in writing ability and improved understanding of task demands and writing processes. Furthermore, reduced teacher workload is another positive impact of SA implementation in the classroom as students do not wait for the traditional teacher feedback. For instance, tools like checklists can effectively lessen teacher burden while promoting student engagement [52]. Add to

the positive outcomes of SA, independent student learning is achieved. The review supports that with utilizing SA interventions, autonomy and systematic writing habits can be fostered [52,42].

Theme 2: Factors Influencing SA Effectiveness

Scaffolding the effect of SA is needed for a maximum benefit of the alternative assessment method. According to this systematic review, factors like providing rubrics, model texts, and most significantly, training can significantly enhance SA effectiveness [55, 51]. The SA instrument layout and content can play a crucial role in its effect. Moreover, when students apply such an assessment tool without knowing the way it should be applied and the reason for application, SA can have limited impact. Other factors influencing SA effectiveness can be the students' themselves. SA impact might differ based on student proficiency levels [41]. Students' levels can affect SA validity. That is, overestimation or underestimation can easily occur if students' levels cannot match the type of SA tool used. Otherwise, subjectivity and potential biases should be acknowledged [57].

Overall, the analysis suggests that self-assessment has a positive impact on writing skills, self-efficacy, and metacognitive development. However, effectiveness can vary depending on implementation and some students' factors like low-level, lack of training, and the type of SA intervention. Careful design, training, and consideration of limitations are crucial for maximizing the benefits of self-assessment in writing instruction.

DISCUSSION

This review has explored the diverse landscape of self-assessment (SA) in EFL writing instruction, uncovering its potential to bolster writing skills and individual development while illuminating factors influencing its effectiveness. The findings paint a complex picture, revealing promising possibilities interwoven with nuanced considerations for successful implementation.

On the bright side, the majority of studies presented compelling evidence for SA's positive impact on various writing aspects like content, language, organization, and task requirements [34; 19; 27;36]. This aligns with the notion that metacognitive engagement fostered by SA equips students with a deeper understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, propelling them toward self-directed improvement. Furthermore, studies like [33; 35; 55] highlight the positive spillover effects of SA on self-confidence in writing and comprehension of writing processes, suggesting a holistic development fostered by this approach. The potential for reduced teacher workload through efficient tools like checklists [52] adds another layer of appeal to SA, making it an attractive option for educators seeking a more collaborative and learner-centered approach.

However, the findings also paint a picture of mixed results and potential pitfalls. Studies like [54]and [44] point to instances where SA did not outperform other methods like peer assessment, underscoring the need for careful consideration of context and implementation strategies. Additionally, [47]'s work highlights the possibility of limited progress in specific areas like grammar, suggesting that SA's impact might not be uniform across all writing skills.

Moving beyond pure skill development, researchers must acknowledge the influence of students' factors on SA effectiveness. Studies like [41]and [34] indicate that proficiency levels can impact SA validity, with potential overestimation or underestimation occurring if tools are not matched to student needs. Honing in on individual differences, addressing potential biases, and providing targeted scaffolding based on student levels are crucial steps in optimizing SA's benefits.

To fully harness the power of SA, careful design, implementation, and ongoing evaluation are essential. As evidenced by studies like [55] and [51], providing students with relevant tools, clear instructions and adequate training significantly enhances SA effectiveness. Similarly, the layout and content of the SA instrument must be meticulously crafted to guide accurate self-assessment and minimize subjectivity. Recognizing and addressing limitations raised in this review, such as small sample sizes in some studies [49; 54; 45] and lack of qualitative data in others [54; 57; 44], paves the way for future research that deepens understanding of SA's intricacies and maximizes its potential in diverse EFL writing contexts.

CONCLUSION

This systematic review examines the use of self-assessment (SA) in EFL writing instruction, analyzing 30 studies published between 2010 and 2023. The review finds that SA can be effective in improving student writing performance, but its success depends on careful implementation. SA can improve writing skills, boost student confidence, and empower learners to take ownership of their learning. However, its effectiveness can vary based on the design of

interventions, student proficiency levels, and teacher support. Further research is needed to explore SA's effectiveness in diverse EFL contexts, especially considering the review's limitations to open-access English-language papers. The above leads to some recommendations for EFL teachers. These can include that EFL teachers should promote student involvement in self-assessment (SA) at every stage of the writing process, including planning, drafting, revising, and editing. To precisely establish the standards for proficient writing, rubrics, checklists, and model texts should be utilized. Add to this, EFL teachers should not assume students to know how to self-assess. Instead, they shall provide explicit training on how to use SA tools, analyze their writing, and identify areas for improvement. Moreover, EFL teachers should use a mix of methods to cater to different learning styles and preferences. They should experiment with different SA techniques to find what works best for their students and the writing task. Finally, EFL teachers should not neglect to provide feedback on students' self-assessment. Teachers should let them know if they are accurately identifying their strengths and weaknesses and offer guidance on how to improve their SA skills. Summing up with implications for policy, it is imperative to provide teachers with comprehensive training in order to equip them with appropriate methodologies and practices for student assessment. Furthermore, it is vital to support research that explores the effectiveness of SA interventions in different EFL writing contexts and to invest in the development of new SA tools and resources that meet the needs of diverse learners. Additionally, there should be a shift of focus from simply grading to promoting student learning and development. Finally, there should be policies and programs that empower students to take ownership of their learning. This includes providing students with the tools and support they need to engage in self-directed learning and self-assessment. While the field is still evolving, the analysis suggests that SA holds great potential to empower EFL writers. By embracing SA's potential while acknowledging its complexities, we can pave the way for a more student-centered and effective EFL writing pedagogy.

Conflicts of Interest. Nil

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دور التقييم الذاتي في تحسين كتابة الطلاب: مراجعة منهجية

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المستخلص

إن عملية الكتابة لها أهمية كبيرة في مجال التعليم كوسيلة للتواصل. ويعد إتقان الكتابة مهارة مهمة يتعين على طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية تحقيقها خلال حياتهم المهنية الأكاديمية. مع ذلك، قد يكون تطوير مهارات الكتابة الأكاديمية أمرًا صعبًا بالنسبة للطلاب والمعلمين على حدٍ سواء. تم دراسة الاستراتيجيات والتدخلات التعليمية المختلفة لتحسين جودة كتابة الطلاب وكان التقييم الذاتي هو أحد هذه الأساليب التي حظيت بقدر كبير من الاهتمام. ومع التركيز المتزايد على التقييم الذاتي في تطوير الكتابة لدى الطلاب، تهدف المراجعة إلى تقديم توليفة شاملة محدثة للأدبيات الحالية حول التقييم الذاتي وعلاقته بمهارات الكتابة. حيث تسعى المراجعة الحالية إلى تحديد ووصف وتجميع قاعدة للأدلة الحديثة المتوفرة حول الدور الذي يلعبه التقييم الذاتي لتحسين مهارات الكتابة لدى طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. تم اختيار حوالي 30 ورقة بحثية من عام 2010 إلى عام 2023 كانت ذات صلة بموضوع هذه المراجعة الاستعراضية. تشير نتائج هذه المراجعة إلى أن التقييم الذاتي يمكن أن يلعب دورًا في تحسين تجربة التعلم لدى الطلاب بشكل عام من خلال تحسين الوعي الذاتي والرضا لديهم؛ ناهيك عن تحسين مهارات الكتابة. أي أنه كلما زاد عدد الطلاب الذين يستخدمون التقييم الذاتي وأصبحوا على دراية بأخطائهم، كانت مهاراتهم في الكتابة أفضل. بشكل عام، تعلم مهارات الكتابة مثل تعليمها، يُمثل تحديًا دائمًا. أخيرًا، ستم مناقشة بعض التوصيات لمعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية والآثار المترتبة على السياسات المتبعة. الكلمات المفتاحية: التقييم الذاتي، كتابات الطلاب، المراجعة المنهجية.