

Promoting Learner Autonomy in Online Argumentative Writing: Virtual Flipped Classroom and Process Writing Approach Enactment

By

Anak Agung Putri Maharani

Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha

Email: anak.agung.putri.2@undiksha.ac.id

Ni Nyoman Padmadewi

Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha

Email: nym.padmawati@undiksha.ac.id

Ni Made Ratminingsih

Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha

Email: made.ratminingsih@undiksha.ac.id

Made Hery Santosa

Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha

Email: mhsantosa@undiksha.ac.id

Abstract

Recently, being autonomous learner has been a great scope of discussion in EFL context as the result of the shifted learning form from offline into online learning. It is being fostered as the pandemic has spread and affected every aspect of life, including education. Therefore, this current study highlighted learner autonomy (abbreviated as LA), explored process writing approach as the means to promote LA, scrutinized the gender differences across the students' autonomy in online writing environment, and the strategies of being autonomous writers in each writing stage. To encounter the aims of this investigation, 28 sophomore EFL learners in English Education Study Program (hereafter, ELESP) taking Argumentative Writing course were engaged as the sources of the research data. As mixed-method research, both quantitative data by means of a questionnaire and qualitative data by means of observation, questionnaire and a semi-structured online interview were garnered and analyzed. The finding revealed that process writing approach can downgrade the students' dependence on the lecturer and upgrade their self-dependence in solving their problems and deciding what should be done next in online writing. However, in relation to goal setting, the students still relied on the lecturer's goal of the writing activities. Then, male and female students were different in the level of autonomy, and they posed various strategies of becoming autonomous writers.

Index Terms— online writing, process writing approach, learner autonomy, EFL

Introduction

Learner autonomy (abbreviated, as LA) is considered crucial within the education field. Reference [1] states that LA is complex and manifested in the form of autonomous language learning which engages practices to control and monitor learners' learning aspects. LA becomes major concern in English as a foreign language teaching [2], and it is of greater significance for foreign language learners as they cannot garner high levels of success in

language learning if they always be spoon-fed by teachers [3]. It is in line with reference [4] the key principle of LA emphasizes on students' role rather than teachers' role. Teachers tend to act as counselors and facilitators in autonomous language class. Additionally, it is essential specifically in terms of foreign language learners' writing skill development [5]. Reference [6] suggest that student writers necessitate to build awareness, knowledge and strategic competence which assist them in developing their writing skills.

Writing as one of crucial skills in English language learning has potential in developing awareness that essential to LA [5]. This awareness in language learning needs to be bloomed to achieve autonomy as learner-users of the foreign language [7]. As stated by reference [5], reflective and communicative writing tasks can produce a pedagogical interface of the awareness. In relation to apply LA in English writing skill, students are expected to poses greater responsibility for and take charge of their own leaning. A study by [8] portrays that practicing autonomy had significant influences upon writing achievement of the EFL subjects. the significant differences seen before and after the students given the treatment. This finding is in line with the view that developing autonomy is fundamental if students are to be effective language users.

Writing allows students to record their experiences permanently and provides a means for reflecting on that experiences aimed at working out ideas and feelings away from the pressure of face to face communication as well as producing writing product as a communication tools with readers who are removed in time and space [9]. Instead of creating product only, writing also serves process that assist the student writers to think and help them to plan, organize their thoughts and ideas, reflect upon their writing, discuss with their peers and finally publish their ready submit writing product. Writing incorporates both process and product of writing that integrates cognitive process within it. The completed product of writing can be analyzed, manipulated, reused, and investigated in a variety of ways which show that the writing product interfaces kinds of awareness [7], [9]. Thus, writing plays an integral part of learner autonomy principle pedagogical implementations.

However, it is not absolute that the students develop autonomy in the same degree and in the same way [10]. Reference [11] claims that students' autonomy and capacity to monitor and control their learning cannot easily be observed, but the exercises of them can be. The students can join the classroom decisions, initiate exchanges in the target language and so forth which can be observed as the factual activities of their autonomy.

Furthermore, it is assumed that gender plays a role in learners' English autonomous learning activities [12]. It is assumed that traditionally males and females have distinguished abilities in terms of language learning, analytical skills, and recent research studies have started to support this mainstream thinking [10]. It has been revealed that the distinctions between male and female students happened related to the aspects of selecting learning strategies, determining the content of study and evaluating outcomes of learning [13]. Further, it was found that female students had higher rate of learning strategy usage, especially related to their metacognitive and affective sides.

A study by reference [12] figured out that male students were more responsible in language learning than females wherein the males were more equipped to read English books. This finding is not consistent with the general belief that females are more active in language learning. Differently, another study by [10] found that females were more responsible and active inside and outside the classroom.

Based on the aforementioned background, threefold research questions were established to be answer within this current study: a) what is the level of the students' autonomy in writing?, b) what are the differences between male and female students in relation to their autonomy in writing? c) what are the strategies conducted by male and female students in every stage of writing process?

Literature review

Learner Autonomy

LA is considered as a fundamental goal in education field. The term of LA was firstly announced by Holec in 1981 who defines it as the ability to take charge of one's learning [14]. Holec believed that autonomous learners are able to decide objectives, define the contents and progressions, select appropriate methods and techniques, monitor the procedures if acquisition and evaluate what has been acquired [13]. Further, there are various definitions occur to fulfil and interpret the concepts of LA. Benson in 1996 conceptualized LA as conceptualizes learner autonomy as someone's competence in learning management in terms of responsibility, ability and right [15]. According to Benson and Lor in 1997, LA can be located at technical, psychological and political levels [16]. The cognitive, metacognitive, and social abilities that learners can use to self-direct their learning are the focus of technical autonomy. The term psychological autonomy relates to emotive elements like attitude and motivation. Political autonomy also refers to the freedom of the individual and the group.

Little in 1997 defines LA as the goal of entire developmental learning which indicated by being autonomous to perform the assigned tasks (1) without help, (2) beyond the immediate context in which they acquired the knowledge and skills on which successful task performance depends, and (3) flexibly, taking account of the special requirements of particular circumstances [7]. According to Schwienhorst in 2008 [17], LA can be defined as pedagogical concept that denotes the capacities of the learners. In line with this idea, students must first take a step back from their own learning. The ability to critically reflect on one's own position as a learner and to acquire linguistic and metalinguistic awareness are both necessary in this pace. Additionally, they become experimenters and explorers of language and language learning in a relax environment.

In EFL context, an indicator of being autonomous learner highlights students' responsibility in ensuring their progress during English lessons [18]. It was believed that allowing students to choose the activities they participated in and the ways in which they learnt could help students become more autonomous [19]. Learning can only take place if students are willing to participate, even though the teachers are still the one in the classroom with the most expertise and experience.

In spite of no single LA conception, all definitions emphasize the fact and information that autonomous learners need to have a say within their learning.

Characteristics of Autonomous Writer

In the attempt to explore and dig the characteristics of autonomous writers, it is crucial to firstly explain the characteristics of autonomous learners. Amongst various and definitions and concepts of LA, the classic and still widely cited one is LA by Holec (1981) that LA is defined as to take charge of one's own learning is to have, and to hold, the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning [5], [14]. In other words, an autonomous learner is the one who can manage and control learning effectively; by inference, an autonomous writer is a student writer [5].

Process Writing Approach and the Development of Autonomy

Writing teaching now places a greater emphasis on writing activity than writing theory, according to emerging knowledge in EFL writing classrooms. Process approach is well acceptably contradicted to traditional product-oriented method of teaching writing [20]. This approach holds the greatest potential in encouraging the development in learner autonomy [5]. Furthermore, the focus of process approach is on miscellaneous classroom activities that encourage language use development [21] and emphasizes both explicit and transparent activities as well as metacognition and reflection which assist writers to develop the writing evolution awareness and recognition on the connection of writing and ideas exploration[22].

Generally, four fundamental writing phases—planning, drafting, rewriting, and editing—as well as three additional stages that teachers impose on their students—responding, evaluating, and post-writing—can be included in process writing [23]. In this case, teachers play appropriate classroom activities that support the learning of specific writing skills at every stage. Therefore, process writing in the classroom is structured as it requires orderly process of teaching. As it is orderly structured, teachers must model the writing process at every stage and teach specific meaningful writing strategies to students.

Additionally, in the context of this investigation process approach in writing is premised to the notion that writing is an iterative process which involves pre-writing, drafting, reflecting, peer or tutor reviewing, revising and publishing [24]. In these stages, teachers clarify the misconceptions about writing by explicitly teaching the stages of the writing process. Firstly, pre-writing through brainstorming and freewriting can assist writers to find ideas, collect information and then organize their thoughts. After writers have their outline, they will draft their writing through developing the ideas. In an initial draft, the writers focus on developing meaning, using ideas garnered in pre-writing strategies.

The strengths of process pedagogy in writing lay in the acknowledgement of the writing cognitive dimensions and it is potential to foster autonomous skills and attitudes such as self-reflection, inner-direct exploration and self-discovery [25], [26]. The aforementioned views about the actual merits of the process approach have found some support in study. A research conducted to investigate the impact of process-based approach to non-English students in an upper-secondary school [22]. It was shown that the respondents in the experimental cohort surpassed those in the control cohort.

Another research conducted at the attempt to reveal the scaffolding effects on EFL students' writing ability through the writing process [27]. The findings showed that scaffolding students' writing through writing process approach met the students' needs in EFL writing, and it has enhanced their writing skill. Furthermore, the students could portray confidentially their ideas in writing.

Virtual Flipped Classroom

Within 21st century where abundance fast accessible information is available, education has moved the devotion to forming students to think of the information they access and then process it critically. It changes the habits of people in writing that everybody can write in print or online [28]. Technology definitely creates new forms of writing as it offers new informational resources and methods, and it encourages sharing, editing, and teamwork among writers and lecturer. Technology in writing enables students to write and share information everywhere and every time [29]. The limitations of time and space provided by conventional writing are reduced by the use of technology. Moreover, information and communication technology provide a way to improve the quality of teaching and learning by giving students access to a wide variety of learning resources. This is the factor embarking the new learning orientation called student centered learning.

The Virtual Flipped Classroom, abbreviated as VFC, arises new challenges that are

dissimilar from those of face-to-face learning. It is as the result of development between virtual and flipped classroom [30]. With frequent adjustments, VFC combines synchronous (live instruction from in-person class meetings) and asynchronous (teacher-directed homework) learning to give students an experience that is closely correlated with concurrent on-campus activities. In this model, the courses are divided into two categories including: asynchronous online courses, and synchronous online course. Asynchronous online courses are mood for theoretical courses which can be done in remote access. Meanwhile, synchronous online courses are helpful and more instructor or students' direct interaction.

Research methods

The Setting

This current investigation was conducted at English Language Education Study Program that equips the graduates with English pedagogy and teacher as well as educator professionals. In the context of this study, the respondents were investigated during their weeks of producing academic argumentative essay. The medium of instruction was mostly done in English and sometimes Bahasa Indonesia was used which believed relevant to local situation. They were taken from one class, and the researcher acted as the lecturer which aimed at setting the class as usual to engage the participants in a naturalistic setting of online writing class.

The argumentative writing class was executed full online to support the policy of the university in preventing the massive spread of pandemic Covid-19. Moreover, the application of online learning became the most possible and crucial solution to conduct teaching and learning process. The researcher in this case applied process approach due to the benefits of stages of writing in yielding quality writing products. Then, to create more prepared and meaningful process of teaching and learning for the students, virtual flipped classroom was chosen to cover the stages of process approach in writing where video lectures and materials were priorly posted via Google Classroom, and all students could watch and read the posted materials before joining into the real classrooms.

Within this course, the students were instructed to create an argumentative essay which nurtured the characteristics and structures of the essay within academic context. Before starting each stage, all students were instructed to watch and read the posted materials. Then, the real time classrooms were done via Zoom meeting, and the classrooms were mainly done by means of writing practice of each writing stage, discussion as well as question and answer related to the posted materials and the product of writing that the students produced.

The Participants

This current study involved 28 sophomores who enrolled Argumentative Writing Course in English Language Education Study Program. Amongst 28 participants, there were 20 females and 8 males. They had been taking English education as their major for 2 years, and they also had joined in the previous two writing courses (Paragraph Writing and Essay Writing) in the former two semesters. In Argumentative Writing Course, they had 16 weeks or meetings including mid-term and final term wherein in a week, they had been provided 200 minutes of English writing. This course mainly focused on creating academic writing products which supported by reasonable reasons and explanations from expert or that taken from trustable resources.

Research Design

A mixed method was utilized covering quantitative and qualitative methods to collect the obtained data [31]. Both quantitative and qualitative methods can be used separately in

different phrases within the study [32]. Specifically, the explanatory mixed method embedded design was used which dominantly highlights quantitative analysis and supported by qualitative analysis. This design was used to strengthen the justification and interpretation of the results by providing chances for the study of more precise quantitative data supported by qualitative results. The quantitative findings were garnered by means of close-ended questionnaire sparking their thoughts on their autonomy levels. Then the qualitative findings were gained by conducting observation and semi-structured online interview.

Data Collection

As both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed in this study, so the data were collected by means of observation, questionnaire, and interview. The observation was guided by observation sheet which record the respondents' activities within all of their writing stages in creating argumentative essay. The questionnaire was in the form of closed-ended questionnaire which was adapted from Xu (2009) [33] and Arias (2015) [34]. The questionnaire was used to garner and measure the learner autonomy level of EFL students, and it consisted of 27 items that used a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (4 points) to strongly disagree (1 point). The items were modified and be more specific to writing context. All of the items were constructed from 6 aspects including evaluation for writing lecturer's aims, evaluation of establishing study goals, evaluation of establishing study goals, evaluation of establishing study plans, evaluation of learning strategies' implementation, evaluation of ability to monitor the usage of learning strategies, and evaluation of English writing process. Furthermore, the questioner was administered online to the respondents through Google Form which could be easily assessed by them in any place and at any time.

The interview was done by applying interview protocols which based on the research question and the results of the questionnaire analysis to guide the researcher to interview the interviewees. The interview protocols were in the form of specific questions list which were developed taking into account the in-dept literature review about autonomous learning by Benson [1], [11], [15] and Inayati, Rachmadhani, and Utami [35]. There were 5 aspects used to create the items of the interview including goal setting, planning, recourse finding, execution and evaluation. Then, the lists of the interview questions were propounded to gather in-depth insights and information from the respondents dealing with their strategies in online autonomous writing. the interview session was done after each stage of writing completed; meaning that there were 6 interview sessions.

Data Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were used to examine the data that had been gathered. The quantitative analysis was executed by calculating the frequency and percentage of the data garnered by administering questionnaire. Then the qualitative analysis which is concerned with interpreting the students' answers to the observation and interview. The qualitative data analysis technique included the following steps: calculating the number of responses and percentage, organizing the responses into tables and graphs, providing interpretation, examining the outcomes of the students' responses, and explaining the findings.

Findings and discussion

Findings

Students' Level of Autonomy in Online Writing Class

To answer the first research question which attempts to identify students' autonomy level in writing, the participants' responses to the LA questionnaire were computed and described. These results are portrayed in table 1.

Table 1 *Students' Level of Autonomy in Online Writing Class*

No	Items	Mean	SD
Evaluation of the lecturer's aims in teaching writing			
1	I clearly understand the teacher's aims in teaching writing.	3.57	0.504
2	It is easy for me to make the teacher's goals in teaching writing into my own goals.	3.46	0.508
3	I clearly understand the importance of making the teacher's goals in teaching writing into my own goals as well as studying hard to achieve those goals.	3.50	0.509
4	I clearly understand the teacher's intention during the teaching and learning activities in writing.	3.57	0.504
5	In class, it is easy for me to keep up with the teacher's pace during the teaching and learning activities in writing.	3.11	0.497
Evaluation of establishing study goals			
6	When learning writing, I establish practical goals for myself based on my true English level.	3.32	0.476
7	I am good at establishing study goals in learning writing based on the requirements outlined by the teacher.	3.14	0.591
Evaluation of establishing study plans			
8	Outside of assignments given by the teacher, I have a clear plan for studying on my own to improve my writing ability.	3.21	0.568
9	I am good at adjusting my study plans in learning writing based on my progress.	3.29	0.600
10	I am good at creating a practical study schedule in learning writing for myself.	3.04	0.508
Evaluation of writing process implementation			
11	I understand the learning strategies to improve my writing ability.	3.32	0.548
12	I can consciously employ brainstorming to improve my writing ability.	3.50	0.577
13	I can consciously employ clustering to improve my writing ability.	3.25	0.585
14	I can consciously employ outlining to improve my writing ability.	3.32	0.548
Evaluation of ability to monitor the usage of writing process			
15	I can consciously monitor the use of brainstorming during writing.	3.25	0.518
16	I can consciously monitor the use of outlining during writing.	3.36	0.559
17	I can consciously monitor the use of drafting during writing.	3.57	0.573
18	I can consciously monitor the use of reflecting during writing.	3.46	0.637
19	I can consciously monitor the use of peer or tutor reviewing during writing.	3.54	0.637
20	I can consciously monitor the use of revising during writing.	3.46	0.508
21	I can consciously monitor the use of publishing during writing.	3.50	0.509
Evaluation of learning class supporting writing			
22	I am able to find and solve problems in my method of study to improve my writing ability.	3.46	0.576
23	I am conscious of whether or not my method of study to improve my writing ability is practical.	3.39	0.567
24	If I realize that my method of study to improve my writing ability is impractical, I quickly find a more suitable one.	3.54	0.508
25	Outside of class, I practice my writing by writing in fun application (story jumper, book creator, padlet, etc).	3.50	0.694
26	Outside of class, I practice my writing by making a writing journal.	3.18	0.723
27	I make an effort to overcome my anxiety that may hinder my writing improvement.	3.64	0.488
Total			

As listed in table 1, the means of the items under the dimension of evaluation of the lecturer's aims in teaching writing (5 items) ranged from 3.11 (SD=0.497) to 3.57 (SD=0.504). The means of the items under evaluation of establishing study goals dimension (2 items) ranged from 3.14 (SD=0.591) to 3.32 (SD=0.476). The means of the items under the dimension of evaluation of establishing study plans (3 items) ranged from 3.04 (SD=0.508) to 3.29 (SD=0.600). The means of the items under dimension of evaluation of writing process implementation (4 items) ranged from 3.25 (SD=0.595) to 3.50 (SD=0.577). The means of the items under the dimension of evaluation of ability to monitor the usage of writing process (7 items) ranged from 3.25 (SD=0.518) to 3.57 (SD=0.573). the means of the items under evaluation of learning class supporting writing dimension (6 items) ranged from 3.18 (SD=0.723) to 3.64 (SD=0.488).

Gender Differences in EFL Learner Autonomy

First of all, to identify the autonomy differences between male and female students, the percentages of their responses upon LA questionnaire were calculated as can be seen in Table 2.

Based on table 2, it can be obviously seen that females and males are dissimilar in responding to the items of the LA questionnaire. Amongst the 6 dimensions of LA, female students outperformed the male students in 4 dimensions (evaluation of the lecturer's aims in teaching writing, evaluation of writing process implementation, evaluation of ability to monitor the usage of writing process, and evaluation of learning class supporting writing) on strongly agree scale. Meanwhile, the male students outperformed the female students in 2 dimensions (evaluation of establishing study goals and evaluation of establishing study plans) on strongly agree scale.

Table 2 Percentages of Gender Differences in EFL Learner Autonomy

No	Statements	Group	SA	A	D	SD
1	Evaluation of the lecturer's aims in teaching writing	Females	54%	45%	1%	0%
		Males	47%	53%	0%	0%
2	Evaluation of establishing study goals	Females	31%	64%	5%	0%
		Males	44%	56%	0%	0%
3	Evaluation of establishing study plans	Females	32%	61%	8%	0%
		Males	35%	65%	0%	0%
4	Evaluation of writing process implementation	Females	49%	47%	4%	0%
		Males	41%	59%	0%	0%
5	Evaluation of ability to monitor the usage of writing process	Females	59%	39%	2%	0%
		Males	49%	50%	1%	0%
6	Evaluation of learning class supporting writing	Females	60%	35%	5%	0%
		Males	57%	43%	0%	0%

Gender Differences in Students' Autonomous Writing Strategies

The detail strategies of the students which portray their autonomy in writing are presented through tables. The strategies are divided into 2 cohorts; females' strategies in writing and males' strategies in writing. Then, to scrutinize more specific data, the strategies in each stage of writing process are revealed. The tables are as follows.

Table 3 Pre-Writing

No	Aspects	Males	Females
1	Goal Setting	Improve writing skills Start writing with good ideas	Find the attractive topic to develop Find the best topic and arrange it well Improve specific skills that affect writing
2	Planning	Write everything that comes out from the mind Search relevant references Create the essay outline based on the essay structure Read more sources by different author	Comprehend the guidance in outlining Search relevant sources to the topic Organize thoughts Do research on the selected topics
3	Resource Finding	Search examples of argumentative essay on websites	Search credible sources
4	Execution	Use framework in outlining Adapt the example provided by the lecturer Adapt the example found on website	Write down several possible topics and eliminate the uninteresting/not ideal topic Use outlining method to structure the outline Use clustering method. Use Grammarly As long as the topic chosen is good, the pre-writing goes well
5	Evaluation	Use criteria as the basis of evaluation Read attentively Coherence and unity	Focus on specific details within the outline Consider the audience needs Adequate supporting details Contain claim and reason

Table 4 Drafting

No	Aspects	Males	Females
1	Goal Setting	Create good draft relevant to the topic and outline Develop the selected topic	Create a good draft supported by trusted sources Organizing the outline into a good draft
2	Planning	Create draft which contains complete structure of essay	Make the supporting sentences that support the topic sentence very well in every paragraph Access journal website
3	Resource Finding	Search resources which support the topic	Takes notes after reading trusted journals
4	Execution	Follow the steps explained by the lecturer	Do proof reading after writing Double-check the work Write neatly
5	Evaluation	Do peer review Check total sentences in each paragraph	Focus on coherence and unity Written in academic style Use criteria listed in scoring rubric

Table 5 *Revising*

No	Aspects	Males	Females
1	Goal Setting	Revise the incoherent sentences which destroy the unity of the essay	Cut or change some point that need to be revised in the draft.
2	Planning	Read sentence per sentence Check comments from lecturer to be used as indicator in revising	Find the shortcomings of the draft Compare the writing before and after revising, if the after revising the writing is the better, it is a good outcome. Complete the draft thoroughly Do search the internet about some synonym of word
3	Resource Finding	Do internet surfing	Change supporting sentences taken from different credible and relevant sources Search for some sources and compare them with my last source to know which one is better.
4	Execution	Analyse the incorrectness of the draft	Read slowly Do revision, edit and proofreading Ask friends' help in revising The revision must be run smoothly and
5	Evaluation	Based on scoring rubric provided	coherent. Clear content, organization and readability

Table 6 *Reflecting*

No	Aspects	Males	Females
1	Goal Setting	Create good writing Get good score	Identify strengths and weaknesses in writing Create purposeful progress Check whether every process goes well.
2	Planning	Recheck the revision	Arrange the writing to be better Appreciate different perspectives given to own draft
3	Resource Finding	Check whether the sources are relevant to the topic	Trust and be dependable on own opinion Write down the things which hinder the writing process
4	Execution	Reread the written work Write own point of view about won essay	Probe solution if being stuck during writing Read the whole draft
5	Evaluation	Check the format, punctuation and mechanic, content, organizations, and grammar and sentence structure.	Focus on coherence and unity Check the format, punctuation and mechanic, content, organizations, and grammar and sentence structure.

Table 7 Peer and Tutor Reviewing

No	Aspects	Males	Females
1	Goal Setting	Get feedback from peer or tutor	Find out what are the other person opinions about own writing Use the other's opinion as the stepping stone in improving own writing Ask their opinion and dig more
2	Planning	Give proper feedback to others	information from them Do question and answer
3	Resource Finding	Ask the lecturer about e-books which relevant to the topic	Find the sources in the internet and some journals Ask some help and suggestion
4	Execution	Use peer or tutor comments as the guidelines in revising	from the lecture or friend to review the strength and weakness of the essay. Focus on coherence and unity
5	Evaluation	Use checklist in reviewing	Check the format, punctuation and mechanic, content, organizations, and grammar and sentence structure.

Table 8 Publishing

No	Aspects	Males	Females
1	Goal Setting	Get good grades Create insightful essay	Create entertaining and enjoyable essay for readers Create beneficial work for readers
2	Planning	Improve and ask the lecturer what needs to be improved or added double check the essay	Find own style that match the public needs. Decorate the design of the publication
3	Resource Finding	Find the sources in the internet and some journals	Find the sources in the internet and some journals which relevant to the written essay Put own self as the reader and read own work, and try to
4	Execution	Use applications and sites to check plagiarism	evaluate the work before publishing. Use web based application to publish (story jumper, book creator) Feedbacks or comments given by
5	Evaluation	Double-check on format, punctuation and mechanic, content, organization, grammar and sentence structure as well as design	people who read the published work. Format, punctuation and grammar and sentence structure as well as design.

Discussion

The implementation of process approach covered within VFC in argumentative writing class has been divided into 6 phases along with the stages of writing by the approach (pre-writing, drafting, revising, reflecting, peer or tutor reviewing, and publishing). This combination was done to execute the requirement of full online learning during the semester. Due to the notion of VFC, it enabled the participants to have out of class and in-class activities. The out of class activities guided and facilitated the students to be equipped and prepared before the real class time conducted. They were instructed to watch video lectures and read other readable e-print materials posted via Google Classroom. However, the in-class activities was done mainly by doing the stages of writing process. They followed one stage in one meeting, then they continued the unfinished in-class activities at home which results would be discussed in the next in-class activities. Conducting EFL writing with the assistance of VFC with process approach enabled the researcher to garner a sense of the student's reaction to autonomy of current forms of writing process, styles of learning and so forth.

In this present study, the respondents were identified having a high level of LA where the means scores of their LA was above 3 (some items were nearly 4 as the maximum mean score). This result was comparable to the findings of Kassem (2022) [3] that the respondents of the study, Saudi college EFL learners, are autonomous with a total mean of 4,02 out of 5 wherein this computed mean, further stated, much higher than the means obtained in researches done prior the shift to online education. Findings from another study also support the present investigation that the students' responsibilities towards their learning within online environment enhanced in writing [9].

Another study in which its researcher conducted and investigated the strengths of process approach to foster LA in writing figured out that the approach can eliminate the respondents' resilience on their teacher; meanwhile, it can grow their metacognitive knowledge about writing as senses of being writers [5], and these become the signs of LA emergence within the respondents. Process approach nurtures autonomous attitudes as well as motivation and self-confidence which may directly or indirectly lead to enhancement of writing performance [36].

A study about flipped classroom combined with CALL [37] figures out that the students have high LA during and after joining flipped classroom assisted by CALL in EFL writing. Online video lectures and class activities in flipped classroom assists fostering LA [38]. Further, reversing the content delivery through video lecturers and students' work outside of classes requires active participation of the students [39], and in this case LA is encouraged through the opportunity provided to students in finding, analysing and evaluating information themselves [40].

As to gender differences, amongst 6 dimensions of LA, female group outperformed the male group in 4 dimensions. This finding supported by several studies [41][42] that crucial differences were identified in favour of female respondents, and gender is related to beliefs about autonomous language learning. This finding is dissimilar with the finding of Kassem in 2022 [3] that female participants outperformed male participants in solely one dimension.

Next, the exploration of strategies that the respondents had done in portraying autonomous writer within online setting were also identified through this study. The strategies were viewed from 5 main domains; goal settings, planning, resource finding, execution and evaluation. All the data to gauge the strategies were garnered through interview. Then the data

were classified and categorized into each dimension. Afterwards, the findings were served in the form of tables to obviously portray the differences between males and females' strategies as autonomous writers. Generally, based on the tables of gender differences in autonomous writing strategies, the female group had more variation and detailed strategies of being autonomous writers in each dimension.

Related to goal setting in every writing process, males and females had shared similar thoughts and ideas. It was because, as observed, they started their goal setting mostly depend on the lecturer's goal of the activities. At the beginning, the lecturer used to explain the purpose and the goal of the activities conducted in every meeting. This finding is similar to the finding that goal setting is highly related to the teacher's responsibility [35]. Another study supports that goal setting, in autonomous learning context, was the aspect that the students considered the most and seen as the teacher' responsibility [43], and the students showed low initiatives in deciding the goal setting. Similar to another study which figured out that low goal setting by the students was caused by their perception that the aspect was their lecturer' areas [44].

Another finding of this study that worth highlighted is planning that was executed variedly by the participants in each writing stage. Most of them stated that they need planning in doing the stage, thus they could obtain the best results as the outcome of the activity they had done. Another study figured out that the students in language learning frequently made plans about the specific language aspects that they wanted to study, and they also preferred deciding short-term planning[35].

Furthermore, in relation to resource finding, almost all respondents claimed that they preferred the assistance of internet to figure out trustable yet credible resources which relevant to support the written essay. They argued that internet provides abundance of information that can be accessible everywhere and every time. Moreover, internet was mostly utilised by them as a searching engine in finding relevant journal articles to their essay. Journal articles can be used effectively in enhancing the truthful usage of hedges when the writers write academic argumentative essays[45].

In term of execution, all respondents showed different and varied strategies to portray their autonomy in writing. Based on the findings gained through interview, the respondents relied on themselves as well as on the assistance of others while executing each writing process. When they relied on themselves, they tended to work independently such as, in pre-writing, they wrote down several topics and eliminated the irrelevant one.

Lastly, the dimension of evaluation was done mainly based on referring to the provided scoring rubric in each stage. The aspects of the scoring rubric in assessing the students' writing were adapted from Oshima and Hogue (2006) [46] covered format, mechanics, contents, organization, grammar and sentence structure. The purposes of using scoring rubrics are essential within this research in two ways, a) the scoring rubric can be the guidance in writing, and b) the scoring rubric is used as assessment tool of the writing work. As the interview results, the participants were confident in writing and able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their written works as they counted on the scoring rubric.

Conclusion

This current study investigated autonomy of the sophomores within their the argumentative writing course in which the teaching and learning process had implemented process approach and virtual flipped classroom. First of all, it had been figured out that the

level of the autonomy of the respondents was above 3 indicating that they enjoyed being autonomous in writing. The next finding, it was revealed that female students outperformed the male students in 4 dimensions of LA on strongly agree scale. The male students were only superiors on strongly agree scale in 2 dimensions of LA. Lastly, the findings related to strategies of being autonomous writers expose that male and female students had various strategies in each writing stage. However, the respondents' goal in writing were mainly dependable on what the lecturer had decided and displayed prior to each stage of writing goal. Even though, this current study is limited to number of respondents in scrutinizing the differences between male and female students' autonomy, but the findings of the study become relevant reference of the scarcity of learner autonomy investigation within writing classroom which engross process approach and virtual flipped classroom. Further studies hopefully involve broader respondents and investigate learner autonomy in writing class which is not restricted to argumentative essay writing.

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