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## Using Self-Regulated Learning with Learning Management System Tools to Develop EFL Student Teachers' Creative Writing

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### Abstract

The present study aimed at investigating the effect of using self-regulated learning with learning management tools to develop EFL student teachers' creative writing. The study adopted a pre-post experimental one-group design. Consequently, 30 fourth-year EFL student teachers enrolled in the English Language Department, Education section, Faculty of Women for Sciences, Arts, and Education, Ain Shams University constituted participants of the study. A pre-post creative writing test—prepared by the researcher—was administrated to achieve the study aims. Students were pretested, to identify their entry level of creative writing. Then, students were introduced and adequately trained through the suggested online Self-Regulated Creative Writing Program on how to develop their overall creative fiction writing (short story) and its subskills. At the completion of the experiment, all participants were posttested. Paired-samples t-test revealed a statistically significant improvement in participants' creative fiction writing ( $t=17.530$ ,  $p>0.01$ ) with a "large" effect size ( $d=3.200$ ) between the pretest and the posttest in favor of the posttest. Therefore, it was concluded that self-regulated learning with learning management system tools had a significant effect on Egyptian EFL student teachers' creative writing. Based on these results, it was recommended that self-regulated learning strategies should be used in teaching EFL classes in general and in facilitating EFL writing in particular and that learning management systems should be integrated into teaching EFL classes due to their two-folded advantages for both teachers as well as students.

**Keywords:** self-regulated learning, learning management system, creative writing, short story, EFL student teachers.

## Introduction

English has been widely acknowledged as an international language. Therefore, many non-English speaking countries promote English proficiency as an effort toward modernization and internalization. Writing is one of the most crucial skills that EFL students should master because of its importance to both their personal and professional lives. Additionally, creativity is necessary for all aspects of our lives. That is why organizations and enterprises now prioritize it. Most often, the texts that students create utilizing their writing abilities reflect their creative sides. Furthermore, writing is regarded as a creative act of self-discovery. Because of this, writing and creativity are inextricably linked.

That is how the term 'creative writing' comes to life. According to Akhter (2014), creative writing expresses feelings, thoughts, or ideas in an imaginative way in which learners could play with the language. It is classified into two kinds: fiction and nonfiction (Carter, 2001; Dawson, 2005; May, 2007; McGurl, 2009; Ramet, 2007). Creative fiction means this kind of writing which uses similes, metaphors, and figurative language to enchant the reader and capture his/her imagination through creating a bond that makes him/her feel a part of the story (Gotham Writers' Workshop, 2003). This genre includes novels, short stories, drama, poetry, prose, and so forth.

In addition, associated with creativity comes self-regulated learning (Min-Huei & Lien-Hsiang, 2015). Practicing self-regulated learning is essential in one's lifelong learning journey (Khat, & Vogel, 2022). It is human beings' most natural way to learn. Self-regulated learning is the ability by which students use self-regulatory mechanisms to actively control their cognitive processes during problem-solving (Cleary & Zimmerman, 2004; Mulyadi et al., 2016). In a self-regulated learning environment, instead of being spoon-fed, learners actively engage in their learning processes and demonstrate a high degree of desire and control over the pursuit of their learning goals (Chyung, 2007).

For years practicing self-regulated learning was limited to face-to-face inside-classroom learning. However, in a rapidly changing digital age, traditional methods have failed to produce satisfactory outcomes in learning (Klopfer et al., 2009). Consequently, in recent years, the tools available for teaching in university settings have changed dramatically from chalk, blackboards, and overhead projectors to more sophisticated digital technologies that could be implemented in an e-learning environment (Holmes & Prieto-Rodriguez, 2018).

Among all the e-learning tools available on the market, learning management systems are viewed as the most basic and reliable e-learning tool in blended learning environments, as they are often the starting point of any web-based learning program (Ssekakubo et al., 2011). According to Holmes and Prieto-Rodriguez (2018), learning management systems are broadly defined as information systems that facilitate e-learning by supporting teaching and learning, but also can perform administrative tasks and facilitate communication between instructors and students.

## I.Context of the Problem

Despite the importance of creative writing for EFL student teachers, previous studies (e.g., Ammar, 2001; Abdul Latif, 2006; Abdurraheem, 2015; El-behery, 2013; EL-Enany, 2009; Mossa, 1994) indicated that EFL student teachers suffer from several problems such as:

1. low level of students' creative writing and lack the ability to express themselves creatively or to use clear and authentic ideas through consistent and organized writings;
2. the inability to use rhetorical methods or to organize ideas in a way that contains any creativity, so students face severe difficulty in producing any creative writing.

## II. Statement of the Problem

Thus, the problem of this study was that there were some weaknesses in Egyptian EFL student teachers' creative writing. In order to find a solution to



this problem, the present study used self-regulated learning with learning management system tools.

### III. Question of the Study

To address this problem, the study sought to answer the following main question:

**What is the effectiveness of using self-regulated learning with learning management system tools to develop EFL student teachers' creative writing?**

### IV. Review of Literature

#### 1. Self-Regulated Learning

Education has evolved as society has changed. Similarly, the roles of the teacher and the student have changed significantly over time (Williamson, 2015). These changes have coincided with developments in the definition of learning. In addition, as the quality of education starts to gain more attention, the transformation and improvement of learning processes have grown a lot (Pange & Dogoriti, 2014). 'Learning how to learn has become an important educational issue (Vermunt, 1995). Thus, over the last three decades, there has been a rising interest in self-regulated learning in educational research. Carneiro et al. (2011) claim that self-regulated learning subsumes key aspects of the learning process, such as cognitive strategies, metacognition, and motivation, in one coherent construct. Central to this construct is the autonomy and responsibility of students to take charge of their own learning. The value of self-regulated learning is in its emphasis on the individual as a pivotal agent in defining learning goals and strategies, recognizing as it does how that individual's perceptions of him or herself alongside learning-task characteristics influence the quality of learning that emerges.

#### *A. Theoretical Foundations of Self-Regulated Learning*

The impetus for studying self-regulation in educational settings arose from diverse sources (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011). Nevertheless, it is not

possible to put an exact date on when systematic efforts began to explore the self-regulation of learning and performance in educational settings (Schunk & Greene, 2018). In contrast with most instructional theories that viewed students as playing primarily a reactive rather than a proactive role, self-regulated theories assume that students can: (a) personally improve their ability to learn through the selective use of metacognitive and motivational strategies; (b) proactively select, structure, and even create advantageous learning environments; and (c) play a significant role in choosing the form and amount of instruction they need (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2007).

Beginning with a social cognitive view, Bandura's social cognitive theory presents the bases for self-regulated learning (Bembenutty et al., 2015) which he refers to as the process of systematically organizing one's thoughts, feelings, and actions to attain one's goals (Usher & Schunk, 2018). Based on this theory, self-regulated learners believe that acquisition of proficiency is a strategically controllable process and that they should accept responsibility for their achievement outcomes (Rajabi, 2012). Accordingly, in social cognitive theory, self-regulated learning is learning that results from students' self-generated thoughts and behaviors that are systematically oriented toward the attainment of their learning goals (Schunk, 2001).

As for social constructivist learning theories, the benefits for learners to be actively engaged in constructing their own understanding have been widely acknowledged (Power, 2016). Thus, one of the shared assumptions of social constructivist learning theories is the significance of self-regulated learning as the key component for successful learning in school and beyond (Zimmerman, 2001) as well as being of great value for students' academic success (Hmelo-Silver et al., 2007). Advocates of the self-regulated learning approach have generated a generally agreed-upon image of the ideal learner, who is likely a self-regulator (Bramucci, 2013).

### *B. Components of Self-Regulated Learning*

Schraw, Kauffman, and Lehman (2002) cover the three main components of self-regulated learning in an integrated manner: cognition, meta-cognition,

and motivation. Cognition includes skills necessary to encode, memorize, and recall information. Meta-cognition includes skills that enable learners to understand and monitor cognitive processes. Whereas motivation includes beliefs and attitudes that affect the use and development of cognitive and meta-cognitive skills. Each of these components is necessary for self-regulation.

### *C. Models, Processes, and Phases of Self-Regulated Learning*

As a result of being an extraordinary umbrella under which a considerable number of variables that influence learning are studied, self-regulated learning has become one of the most important areas of research within educational psychology (Panadero, 2017). Thus, a number of different models have been developed over the last two decades to explain the processes that underpin self-regulated learning (Mcmahon & Oliver, 2001; Panadero, 2017; Puustinen & Pulkkinen, 2001; Schunk & Greene, 2018; Sitzmann & Ely, 2011). These models posit alternative views on how learning is self-regulated (Siadaty et al., 2016); however, in general, they aim to describe how learners take control of and manage their learning processes (Wolters, 2010).

This study adopts Andrade and Evans' (2013) Six Principles of Self-Regulated Learning; thus, the focus will be on explaining this framework. Andrade and Evans (2013) divide self-regulated learning strategies into four categories which include: a) metacognitive (planning, setting goals, monitoring, evaluating), b) motivation (the ability to self-motivate, taking responsibility for successes & failures, developing self-efficacy), c) cognitive (understanding & remembering information), d) and behavior (seeking help, creating a positive learning environment). These categories of self-regulated learning are associated with six dimensions that correspond to the questions why, how, when, where, with whom, and what. These dimensions work in concert with one another to help learners become self-regulated writers. They are further explained below:

1. *Motive*, is related to the reasons for learning and answers the question of **why**. It involves setting realistic goals, examining self-talks (e.g., the



- positive & negative comments that individuals make about themselves), and managing emotions.
2. *Method*, focuses on the cognitive aspect of self-regulated learning and refers to **how** learners learn. It includes approaches such as summarizing, note-taking, asking questions, and rehearsing information and visual representations (e.g., charts, maps, pictures, etc.).
  3. *Time*, is the third dimension which involves consideration of **when** to study and for how long. It encompasses both the metacognitive and behavioral aspects of self-regulated learning.
  4. *Physical environment*, is **where** learning takes place and it also involves the self-regulated learning aspects of metacognition and behavior to ensure that learners' surroundings support effective study.
  5. *Social environment*, refers to learners' ability to seek, find, and evaluate help. It answers the question **with whom** and involves all four categories of self-regulated learning.
  6. *Performance* is the last dimension and it primarily involves the motive, metacognitive, and behavioral features of self-regulated learning to examine **what** is learned.

Eventually, self-regulated learning is a worthy goal for second language learners of all ages (Paris & Paris, 2001). Its principles could be applied in various contexts whether online or face-to-face to improve the learning experience. In addition, when teachers support the development of self-regulated learning by engaging learners in complex open-ended tasks, offering choices, allowing them to control the level of challenge, and providing opportunities for self- and peer-evaluation (Perry et al., 2004), learners start to possess self-regulated behaviors which, in turn, help them become higher-achievers (Andrade & Evans, 2013).

## 2. Learning Management System

For years practicing self-regulated learning was limited to face-to-face inside-classroom learning. However, in a rapidly changing digital age, traditional methods have failed to produce satisfactory outcomes in learning

(Klopfer et al., 2009). In the standard classroom, paper textbooks, and paper handouts are no longer the only way to teach and educate students (Han & Shin, 2016). As a result, there is an increasing urgency to integrate new digital technologies in order to meet the needs of this rapid pace age. A learning management system is simply considered the most representative e-learning application (Georgouli et al., 2008) which serves as the "missing link" that tie together contemporary education reforms with effective and creative uses of technology (Phillipo & Krongard, 2012, p. 27).

#### *A. Theoretical Foundations of Learning Management System*

Learning management systems related literature is varied and presents several different perspectives depending on how instructors and students perceive and use these systems for teaching and learning (Lonn, 2009). Therefore, they are based on several general and overlapping theoretical perspectives. Examples of these theories are:

##### a) Blended Learning

Blended learning is considered the latest step in a long history of technology-based training (Bersin, 2004). Dowling (2010) asserts that incorporating blended learning materials within a learning management system is one of the most effective. In this context, Goyal and Tambe (2015) believe that a blended learning environment could be supplemented by the various options offered by learning management systems such as assignment submission, messaging, class notices, attendance, session plans, academic calendars, class notes, and so forth.

##### b) Learner-Centered Instruction

According to Hyde (2015), learning management systems provide a good student-centered learning environment in which students: (a) are given a voice and choice in their learning; (b) encouraged to gather knowledge themselves; (c) are inspired to create rather than consume; and (d) are empowered to take ownership of their learning. Additionally, Kumi-Yeboah (2015) confirms that

learning management systems, as virtual learning management, apply the principles of student-centered through providing learning environments that: (1) respond to each student's needs and interests; (2) make use of new tools; (3) embrace the adolescent's experience and learning theory as the starting point of education; (4) harness the full range of learning experiences at all times of the day, week, and year; (5) expand and reshape the role of the educator; and (6) determine progression based upon mastery.

### *B. Features of Learning Management Systems*

According to Bates and Sangrà (2011), a learning management system is a flexible educational approach that includes several Web 2.0 tools and enables the reorganization of these tools differently, depending on the personal interpretation of the teacher. Dabbagh and Kitsantas (2005) identify the most common features of a learning management system as follows:

(a) *Content creation and display tools*, which allow instructors to generate course content within an embedded text/HTML editor or to upload documents, spreadsheets, presentations, images, animations, audio, video, or hyperlinks. Instructors can organize content into folders and subfolders and can use the content release feature to display or hide folders and individual content items; thereby giving the instructor control over when content is viewable by students.

(b) *Communication tools*, which enable instructors to incorporate student-instructor and student-student interaction into the course. They also include synchronous and asynchronous tools.

(c) *Assessment tools*, which provide instructors with a number of ways to test, survey and track student achievement and activity in the course. Common tools include a test/assessment manager for creating and deploying exams, a generator for creating different types of questions and question polls or test banks to store questions that can be used for multiple exams. Questions in an exam and choices in a multiple-choice question can be randomized and can be displayed one-at-a-time or all at once. Instructors can give a time limit for exams and can specify the type and amount of feedback that students receive or

correct and incorrect answers. Exams can be graded, ungraded, or delivered as anonymous surveys with aggregated results.

(d) *Administrative tools for instructors*, which include control panels with the ability to manage the settings for the content creation, communication and assessment tools, customize the look of the course, make tools, content, and resources available or unavailable to users, manage files and move or copy content.

## V. Hypotheses of the Study

There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the fourth-year EFL student teachers' overall performance on the pre-post creative fiction writing test (short story) and its subskills at 0.01 level of significance in favor of the posttest.

## VI. Definitions of terms

### a. *Self-Regulated Learning*

In the present study, self-regulated learning is operationally defined as the ability of learners to control the factors or conditions affecting their learning through a mental conscious constructive process: a) students actively participate in their learning; b) systematically use metacognitive, motivational, cognitive, and behavioral strategies to answer why, how, when, where, with whom, and what questions that help them successfully plan for their learning; c) carefully monitor their self-perception of task accomplishment; d) positively response to the feedback regarding the effectiveness of their learning; and e) adequately assess their ability to achieve the desired goals.

### b. *Learning Management System*

For the present study, the researcher operationally defines a learning management system as a key enabling technology for any time anywhere learning and access to content, services, and tutoring support (Dobre, 2015). It

stands as an alternative to traditional education that facilitates learner-instructor and learner-learner communication through features such as discussion boards, permits the tracking of students' behaviors, grants the exchange of different forms of feedback, and allows both instructors and students to monitor progress (Richards & Schmidt, 2013).

### c. Creative Writing

Operationally, creative writing is the process of expressing and presenting thoughts in an appealing way. The writer thinks critically and reshapes something known into something that is original. Each piece of writing has a purpose and is targeted at an audience. It is organized cohesively with a clear beginning, middle, and end. Attention is paid to choose of apt vocabulary, figurative use of the language, and style. The study was limited to the creative fiction genre in a form of writing a short story.

## VII. Method and Procedures

### i. Design

A one-group pre-posttest quasi-experimental design was employed. Students were pretested on creative fiction writing before the treatment and then posttested after it. Differences between the pretest and the posttest were identified.

### ii. Participants

Participants were 30 fourth-year EFL student teachers at the Faculty of Women for Arts, Sciences, and Education, Ain Shams University. All participants have often received English writing instruction at the university through lecturing. Participants' age ranged from 21 to 23 years.

### iii. Measure

#### 1. Creative Fiction Writing Pre-posttest (Short Story)



A creative fiction writing pre-posttest was devised by the researcher that aimed at measuring student teachers' creative writing ability in the fiction genre before and after the experiment. It consisted of a creative fiction writing task which was a short story. The length of the short story was set to be at least 500 words. Four topics were given to students to choose one of them to write on. The four topic prompts suggested different imaginary situations—(e.g., a dead person who suddenly comes back, standing in front of a fountain that truly grants wishes, accidentally overhearing a big secret that you weren't meant to, etc.)—to encourage students' creativity and imagination.

To determine the creative fiction writing pre-posttest content validity, nine experts in the field of TEFL were relied on for their opinions on the appropriateness of test topics. For construct validity, the researcher followed the Differential-group Strategy. Using this strategy, the researcher administered each test to three different groups of students. Group 1 consisted of 30 first-year secondary students, Group 2 consisted of 30 third-year secondary students, and Group 3 consisted of 30 fourth-year EFL students at Suez Faculty of Education. The researcher predicted that if the pre-posttest has construct validity, it would differentiate between students who have different levels of creative writing construct. Using a one-way analysis of variance indicated that significant differences existed among the mean scores of the three groups on the pre-posttest ( $f=282.590$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). In addition, three subsequent independent samples t-tests were employed to compare the differences between every two groups. Results from the t-tests indicated that students in Group 2 scored significantly higher than those in Group 1 ( $t=7.850$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and lower than those in Group 3 ( $t=14.934$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) respectively. The results also showed that students in Group 3 scored significantly higher than those in Group 1 ( $t=22.833$ ,  $p<0.01$ ).

Test-retest reliability was achieved by administering the test twice, within a 14-day time span. Pearson's Coefficient of correlation between the two administrations was 0.916. This coefficient was significant at the 0.01 level.

## 2. Short Story Rubric

In order to evaluate EFL student teachers' mastery level of the creative fiction writing skills, techniques, and tools, the researcher developed a short

story rubric. In this rubric, 48 marks were divided among the three main criteria chosen for the short story question. The criteria included content and organization, story elements, and the creative use of language. The components contained in the organization criterion were plot/structure and idea. The story elements consisted of the setting, characters, dialogue, conflict, and suspense. Finally, the creative use of language criterion measured creativity and originality, literary devices, sentence fluency, word choice, as well as conventions. Each of these components had four levels (advanced, proficient, needs improvement, & unsatisfactory) and it was assigned four marks (4 marks for advanced, 3 marks for proficient, 2 marks for needs improvement, & 1 mark for unsatisfactory). The scoring rubric included a full explanation of each level of these components with short behavioral and measurable statements.

Nine experts in the field of TEFL were relied on for their academic advice on the appropriateness of the rubric criteria. Reviewers' suggestions were taken into consideration. To measure the reliability of the rubric, it was compared to the impressionistic grading method. The three raters graded students' answers according to a single grade based on the impression of the stories. After two weeks, the same raters were asked to grade copies of the same scripts using the rubric devised by the researcher. The use of one-way analysis of variance indicated that significant differences existed among the marks of the three raters when they followed the impressionistic method ( $f=17.272$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) while no significant differences existed among the same raters' marks when they followed the rubric devised by the researcher ( $f=0.034$ ,  $p>0.01$ ).

#### iv. Procedures

The experimental procedures of the present study were carried out at the Faculty of Women, Ain Shams University, during the first semester of the 2021/2022 academic year. These procedures were executed in four successive stages: pretesting, setting the scene, implementing the SRCWP, and posttesting. As for pretesting and posttesting, the creative fiction writing test was administered to all participants to compare their levels of creative fiction writing before and after the application of the suggested program, respectively. As for

setting the scene and implementing the program, these two stages are described below.

a) Setting the scene

To build this intensive online program, the researcher examined many self-regulated learning strategies as well as learning management systems that could be used to create the online course. After exploring a number of self-regulated learning models and strategies, the researcher chose the *Six Principles of Self-Regulated Learning* by Andrade and Evans (2013) to be the framework she presents to her students during the experiment. This preference was due to these reasons which were presented by Andrade and Evans (2013):

- It serves as a framework for creating language learning plans.
- It assists teachers in guiding learners to take more responsibility for improving their writing skills.
- It results in the development of learners' effective writing habits.
- It applies the concept of self-regulated learning to second language writing.
- It aims at developing writers who can effectively use self-regulatory strategies throughout the writing process to produce clear, accurate written texts.

Regarding the learning management systems, the researcher investigated many platforms which were free or inexpensive, such as Edmodo, Blackboard, Moodle, Schoology, Itslearning, Canva, Sakai, and Google Classroom. After surveying these platforms, Schoology was selected by the researcher as the learning management system to be used during the experiment. This selection was due to the following reasons:

- It is a free secure social learning platform with a design that is similar to Facebook which allows conversations, messages, comments, and sharing of information and other media such as photos and videos (Manning et al., 2011).
- It improves learning through collaboration and communication (Abbas, 2020).

- c. It increases the level of students' metacognitive thinking skills (Suryati et al., 2019).
- d. It creates a good atmosphere, motivates passive students to give their opinion through online learning, and helps them in learning English as well (Abbas, 2020).
- e. It can be an effective tool for enhancing college student's proficiency in writing (Sicat, 2015).
- f. It not only supports students in learning English but also helps EFL teachers to create a paperless culture in education, gives online assignments and online assessments, and even connects the students in discussion with each other about certain topics (Astuti, 2019).

To decide the validity of the program, it was submitted to a jury of TEFL specialists to judge: (1) the clarity of the objectives, (2) the appropriateness of the suggested program for fourth-year EFL students, (3) the academic verification of the content of the program, (4) the consistency of various activities and procedures with the overall design of the program, (5) the pertinence of objectives of training sessions to the overall goals of the program, and (6) the overall suitability of the training program. Some reviewers gave recommendations concerning some tasks and activities. All those suggestions and recommendations were taken into consideration during modifying the program.

#### b) Implementing the SRCWP

After determining the level of the students in creative fiction writing, participants were exposed to the proposed Self-Regulated Creative Writing Program (SRCWP) which aimed at developing their creative fiction writing skills through practicing self-regulated learning strategies. The SRCWP consisted of 9 sessions. Its content was introduced in approximately 33 hours—there was the flexibility to be less or more according to students' pace—that was distributed over 9 weeks, one session per week. The sessions were intended to facilitate using self-regulated learning strategies (e.g., metacognitive, behavioral, cognitive, & social) along with a learning management system to

regulate the stages of the writing process. Thus, the learners wrote their own short stories, reflected on their journey while writing, self-assessed their progress, and got detailed feedback on them from the instructor/researcher.

The first session was devoted to getting students acquainted with Schoology as an e-learning platform/LMS and introducing them to the features and tools that they would be using during the implementation of the program. Additionally, students were encouraged to do similar tasks to the ones they would be doing during the course (e.g., submit assignments, take quizzes, comment on a discussion, etc.). In the second session, participants were introduced to self-regulated learning and its meaning, principles, steps, and strategies in general. Then, with the focus on Andrade and Evans's (2013) Six Principles of Self-Regulated Learning, learners were deliberately instructed on how to use these strategies and follow the six steps to creating a more effective learning process for themselves throughout the course. They were also given examples of how to integrate these strategies with their writing process.

The main questions of the third and fourth sessions were "What is creative writing? and What are its tools?" In order to answer these questions, learners were introduced to the difference between familiar academic writing and creative writing. They were trained on how to use creative writing tools and techniques. They started applying literary devices such as simile, metaphor, hyperbole, and personification in different writing texts. They were given guided examples, they practiced doing activities and answering quizzes. Learners were also introduced to other creative writing tools such as using sensory language (e.g., vivid adjectives, verbs, & adverbs) that would help them paint visual mental images that capture their reader's mind leaving a strong memorable impression on him/her. Additionally, they were instructed to use the "show don't tell" technique to express emotions, feelings, characters' qualities, and/or settings. Eventually, they produced their own piece of writing that combined the literary devices, tools, and techniques they learned about so far.



During the remaining five sessions, learners were focusing on adopting self-regulated learning strategies in their creative writing process. They were encouraged to apply all the techniques and tools that they have learned to write their short stories by taking into consideration the story elements. Each session, they were given a new topic to write on. At the beginning of every new task, students used a self-regulation study plan (prepared by the researcher) to help them outline their goals and methods, observe their behavior, track their thoughts, and monitor their progress. In addition, by the submission of each short story, students got individual feedback for the researcher and were encouraged to self-assess their process using a self-assessment reflection sheet (prepared by the researcher).

## VIII. Results

Paired-samples t-test was used to test the difference between the means of scores of the participants on the pretest and the posttest of the overall performance of creative fiction writing and its subskills. This difference was statistically significant in the overall creative fiction writing performance ( $t=17.530$ ,  $p>0.01$ ) in favor of the posttest; see Table 1. Using Cohen's (1988) formula, the effect size for this difference was 3.200 which is considered a large effect size.

**Table 1.**

*Paired Samples t-test for the Difference between the Mean Scores of EFL Student Teachers' Overall Performance on the Pre-Post Creative Fiction Writing Test (Short Story)*

Test	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	Probability
Creative Fiction Pretest	30	24.100	5.013	17.530	Sig. at 0.01
Creative Fiction Posttest	30	39.367	4.460		

Additionally, in an attempt to determine whether any change in creative fiction writing subskills from pre- to posttest occurred, the researcher used the paired-samples t-test. As indicated in Table 2, there was a statistically significant difference ( $T=10.446$ ,  $p>0.01$ ) between the mean scores of EFL student teachers in the content and organization subskill on the pre-posttest of creative fiction writing (short story). Using Cohen's formula, the effect size for this difference was 1.907. This effect size is considered "large". In addition, story elements were the second subskill measured on the creative fiction writing test. Results on story elements revealed a statistically significant difference ( $T=16.224$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) between the mean scores of EFL student teachers on the pre-posttest of creative fiction writing. The effect size for this difference was 2.962. This size effect is interpreted as a "large" significance. Finally, findings for the creative use of the language subskill showed that there was a statistically significant difference ( $T=14.630$ ,  $p>0.01$ ) between the mean scores of EFL student teachers on the pre-posttest of creative fiction writing in favor of the posttest. Additionally, a large effect-size was found ( $d=2.671$ ).

**Table 2.**

*Paired Samples t-test for the Difference between the Mean Scores of EFL Student Teachers' Performance on the Subskills of the Pre-Post Creative Fiction Writing Test (Short Story)*

Test	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	Probability
Content & Organization Pre	30	5.067	1.143	10.446	Sig. at 0.01
Content & Organization Post	30	7.100	0.803		
Story Elements Pre	30	8.667	2.682	16.224	Sig. at 0.01
Story Elements Post	30	16.433	2.128		
Creative use of the language Pre	30	10.367	1.847	14.630	Sig. at 0.01
Creative use of the language Post	30	15.833	2.036		

## IX. Discussion

In the present study, it was hypothesized that there would be statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the fourth-year EFL student teachers' overall performance on the pre-post creative fiction writing test (short story) and its subskills at a 0.01 level of significance in favor of the posttest. A paired-samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference in favor of the posttest ( $t=17.530$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). A probable reason for the result reached in this study may attribute to the self-regulated learning strategies which students adopted while practicing writing. These strategies included: a) planning, which refers to setting specific writing goals, preparing writing materials, and organizing writing ideas; b) self-monitoring, which means checking and evaluating the text during the writing process, such as the use of vocabulary and grammar; c) revising, which deals with the writing challenges, and focuses on checking and editing the written text to meet the writing requirements; and d) reflecting, in which they elaborate on their progress towards goals as well as their overall takeaways from accomplishing the whole task. These categories of strategies might have helped students to achieve a better understanding of the writing process, thus, encouraging improving writing skills as well as enhancing the quality of the written text. This explanation is assured by Guo and Bai (2019) who believe that using self-regulated learning strategies plays a significant role in students' writing competence. This is also confirmed by Graham et al. (2005) who claim that students, who receive instructional guidance on how to foster their use of various self-regulated learning strategies, write longer, more complete, and better stories and persuasive essays.

Another explanation that validates the findings of the present study might be related to the different kinds of feedback (instructor & self) that were considered integral steps during the program. This was confirmed by Inan-Karagul and Seker (2021) who advocate that in the context of writing instruction, effective feedback plays a crucial pedagogical role because it is simply regarded as a means of effective communication between learners and the teacher. It was also in consistence with Heidarian's (2016) suggestion that the self-evaluation strategy is useful because it helps learners consciously improve their writing skills through locating, correcting, and thus avoiding

mistakes and motivating themselves to learn English by having a more student-centered learning environment that increases cooperation between students and teachers.

A further possible explanation might have been that the SRCWP provided students with a non-threatening friendly atmosphere for writing, revising, editing, and sharing their writing tasks. This interpretation is in line with Finch's (2001) assertion that the promotion of a low-stress language learning environment must be an important priority for the teacher because it hugely impacts students' achievement and progress in learning the language skills. He has suggested achieving this by providing teachers with constant help and feedback and also by encouraging peer support networks which, in fact, is a distinguishing feature of learning management systems. Withing the SRCWP, learners were able to socially interact with their instructor and collaboratively communicate with their peers. This might have helped those learners reduce their tension about writing and encouraged them to consider their instructor's as well as their self's feedback as a helpful way to be better writers. Additionally, this explanation is supported by many researchers (e.g., Hughes & Robertson, 2010; Solomon & Schrum, 2007; Tu et al., 2012). Furthermore, during learning via Schoology, students felt that they were always provided assistance whenever needed. In addition, throughout the discussion forum, they were able to discuss various topics together and provide feedback and help for each other.

One more explanation is that self-regulation with the learning management system might have responded to participants' preferences to write in a creative and innovative manner. This explanation finds evidence in some of the participants' comments on the SRCWP which were collected by the researcher at the end of the study. For example, one student said, "for the first time in my life, I feel I'm able to express my ideas and thoughts in good English." Another student expressed her view by saying: "I was weak in writing and I couldn't organize my thoughts but after the course, my writings improved a lot more than before". A different student said: "I thought I could not write a short story. But after the course, I can do it. I think that my writing has improved. I now can use strong vivid vocabulary and vary my similes,

metaphors, and personification.” Another student explained: “with having a plan and writing my observations and reflections, I spotted my strengths and weaknesses. I found out that I have a strong imagination. The instructor also encouraged me with her positive and continuous feedback. I was astonished when I realized that I'm able to write a short story on my own!” One last student said: “After the course, I understood my learning style and I knew how to set a plan and follow the writing process by my own. Also, before I have never used literary devices or figurative language.” Many others expressed that their writings have improved drastically and that the program was so much fun, easy, and gave them the freedom to learn at their own pace and they agreed that they spent a great time learning without being stressed by so many quizzes or overwhelmed by a large number of tasks as they experience in their real classes. This explanation is further supported by some empirical studies (e. g., Alturki & Aldraiweesh, 2021; Islam, 2013; Komara, 2020) who found that most students enjoyed learning using a learning management system as they consider it a self-paced platform that easily keeps track of their performance, learning behavior, and areas they need to improve gives them the access to course material in multiple formats like audio, video, text content, and more, and also makes learning fun, creative, and productive.

A final explanation for the improvement of students' creative writing is that during the creation of their short stories, students might have benefited from using digital writing tools. They were able to take advantage of the software and web tools for brainstorming, organizing, and rehearsing their thoughts and ideas. They were also able to revise their writing easily by using the word processing function in Microsoft Word® and Google Docs®. Therefore, they no longer had to suffer through the tedium of handwriting each draft. This explanation agrees with Blakesley and Hoogeveen's (2012) view that digital writing offers tremendous opportunities for every writer student to support and improve his/her writing with the use of software and online applications. It also goes in line with McKee's (2016) belief that writing in a digital environment may provide students the opportunity to see that writing is a process that requires persistence. Moreover, Nobles and Paganucci's (2015) findings confirm that students feel that writing with the support of digital tools



increases writing quality and advances skill development more than on paper. They also mention that with the help of digital writing, students feel they use more vivid vocabulary, varied sentence structure, increased organization and clarity, and better spelling. Thus, while just being student perception, these results are still promising and promoting the advantages of using a digital writing environment.

## X. Conclusion

Based on the result of the present study, the researcher concluded that using self-regulated learning strategies with learning management system tools has improved the creative writing of the participants of the study.

## XI. Recommendations

Based on the result of the present study, the researcher recommends 1) using self-regulated learning principles and strategies in teaching EFL classes in general and in facilitating EFL writing in particular; 2) encouraging students to be self-regulated learners to help them adhere to the concepts of autonomy and life-long learning; 3) integrating learning management systems in teaching EFL classes whether face-to-face, flipped, blended, or virtual due to their two-folded advantages for both teachers as well as students; and 4) teaching creative writing should be given more attention, time, and effort in EFL classes as it constitutes a major problem for most students.

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استخدام التعلم المنظم ذاتياً و أدوات نظم إدارة التعلم لتنمية الكتابة الإبداعية لدى الطلاب  
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## المستخلص

هدفت الدراسة الحالية إلى معرفة تأثير استخدام التعلم المنظم ذاتياً مع أدوات إدارة التعلم لتنمية الكتابة الإبداعية لدى الطلاب معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. اعتمدت الدراسة على تصميم المجموعة الواحدة بقياس قبلي وبعدي. وبناءً على ذلك، شاركت في الدراسة 30 طالبة من طلاب السنة الرابعة بتخصص اللغة الإنجليزية، بالقسم التربوي بكلية البنات للعلوم والآداب والتربية، جامعة عين شمس. تم استخدام اختبار الكتابة الإبداعية القبلي البعدي الذي أعدته الباحثة لتحقيق أهداف الدراسة، واختبار الطالبات قبلياً لتحديد مستوى الكتابة الإبداعية لديهن. ثم تم تدريب الطالبات بشكل كافٍ من خلال البرنامج المقترح لتنمية الكتابة الإبداعية باستخدام التعلم المنظم ذاتياً، والذي تم تدريسه عن بعد باستخدام إحدى أنظمة إدارة التعلم. تمحور البرنامج حول تطوير مهارات الكتابات الإبداعية من خلال كتابة القصص القصيرة. بعد انتهاء فترة التدريب، تم اختبار جميع الطالبات مرة أخرى بعدياً. أشار التحليل الإحصائي لنتائج اختبار t للعينات المرتبطة عن تحسن ذي دلالة إحصائية في الكتابة الإبداعية (ت=17.530، ف<0.01)، بحجم تأثير "كبير" (ف=3.200) بين الاختبار القبلي والبعدي، لصالح الاختبار البعدي. مما أدى إلى استنتاج فاعلية استخدام التعلم المنظم ذاتياً مع أدوات نظام إدارة التعلم على الكتابة الإبداعية لدى الطلاب معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. بناءً على هذه النتائج، تمت التوصية بضرورة استخدام استراتيجيات التعلم المنظم ذاتياً في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية بشكل عام وفي تطوير مهارات الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية بشكل خاص، كما تمت التوصية بدمج أنظمة إدارة التعلم في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية نظراً لمزاياها لكلاً من المعلمين وكذلك الطلاب.

**الكلمات الدالة:** التعلم المنظم ذاتياً، نظم إدارة التعلم، الكتابة الإبداعية، القصة القصيرة.